United Nations A/66/277

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 August 2011

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Item 25 of the provisional agenda*

Agriculture development and food security: progress on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Food Security

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Reducing the number and proportion of people who suffer from hunger and malnutrition is one of today's most difficult challenges. Efforts have been made more difficult by higher and more volatile food and fuel prices, political conflict, and persistent underinvestment in agriculture, food and nutrition. Many countries lack the social safety nets necessary to avert disasters such as the famine currently affecting Somalia. Long-term investments in sustainable agriculture, interlinked with efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change, alleviate poverty, empower women, improve market access, and manage ecosystems and natural resources, are not happening quickly enough. Country-led responses supported by the international community must be intensified to meet the internationally agreed goals by 2015.

* A/66/150.

11-44732 (E) 260811

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Overview	4
III.	Short-term safety nets	8
IV.	Long-term sustainable development	10
V.	Strategic coordination and effective collaboration	15
VI.	Conclusion	20

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/178 that the Secretary-General submit to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session a report on developments related to global efforts to address agriculture development and food and nutrition security, and on progress in the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Food Security.

2. Food and nutrition security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.[1] Food and nutrition security therefore covers availability, access, utilization and stability issues, and, because of its focus on the attributes of individuals, also embraces their energy, protein and nutrient needs for life, activity, pregnancy, growth and long-term capabilities. Food and nutrition security is a precondition for the full enjoyment of the right to food.[2]

3. Addressing the problem of global food and nutrition insecurity is one of the most important challenges of our time. Countries in the Horn of Africa are facing extreme crisis triggered by several seasons of irregular rainfall causing severe drought, and the world is far from reaching the goal of halving the number of hungry and malnourished in the world by 2015. International food and oil price rises are simultaneously putting pressure on the budgets of poor households and increasing the cost of humanitarian operations. The impacts of hunger and malnutrition can be especially severe for pregnant and lactating women, very young children, people living with disabilities and chronic disease (such as HIV/AIDS), the elderly, and other particularly vulnerable groups.

4. Expectations are high that the United Nations can help make a significant difference both in the immediate and the medium-longer term, particularly for those on low incomes who are net food buyers, including poor urban dwellers and rural people. A more coordinated effort is being undertaken as a result of the 2009 World Summit on Food Security.

5. This report benefited from inputs received from the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, including contributions from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Task Force has intensified its work over the past year to mitigate and address the effects of recent price rises and excessive volatility, as well as the structural causes of food and nutrition insecurity in a comprehensive way, especially at the country level.

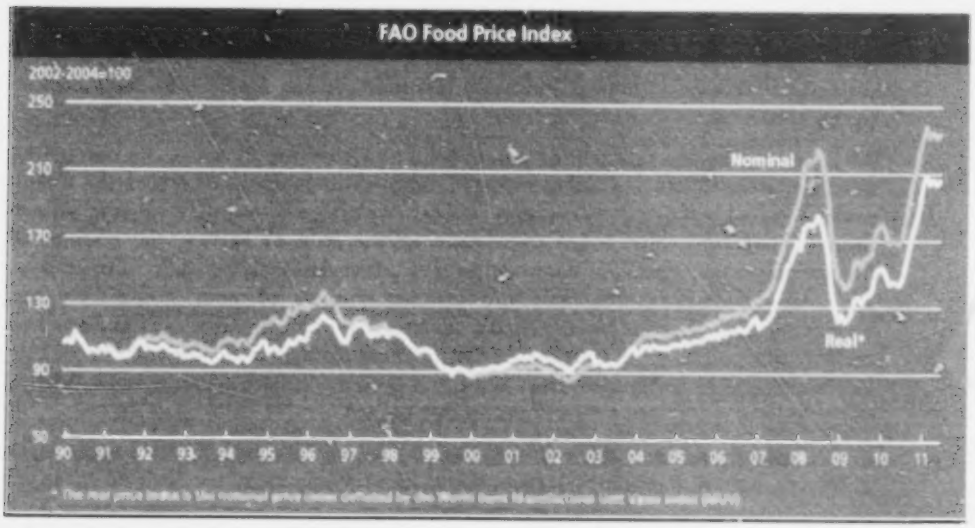
[1] High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, "Food and Nutrition Security: Comprehensive Framework for Action", a Summary of the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action, August 2011.

[2] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations fact sheet on the right to adequate food (OHCHR Fact Sheet Series No. 34).

II. Overview

Food price volatility: recent trends and drivers

6. Food prices have risen to an all-time high. The FAO Food Price Index hit a record 238 points in February 2011.[3] It averaged 234 points in June — 1 per cent higher than in May 2011 and 39 per cent higher than in June 2010. A strong rise in international sugar prices was behind much of the increase in the June value of the index. The FAO/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) publication *Agricultural Outlook* expects prices to remain above their historical trend levels and to continue to be volatile in the medium term.



Source: FAO, 2011.

7. Some degree of price volatility is typical of agricultural commodity markets as a result of their fundamental characteristics. Agricultural production is subject to natural shocks such as weather variations, pests and diseases. The recent price volatility has its origins in such fundamental factors — weather shocks in key producing and exporting countries coinciding with low stock levels.

8. The demand for food and feed crops for the production of biofuels is another significant factor. During the 2007-2009 period biofuels accounted for a significant share of global use of several crops.[4]

9. However, movements in the prices of food commodities in 2011 differ from what happened in 2008. In a number of countries, including in Africa, 2010 grain harvests were above average. Some domestic food prices are higher than in 2008, while others are relatively low compared to world price levels. The price of rice on

[3] The FAO Food Price Index is a measure of the monthly change in the international prices of a basket of food commodities. It consists of the average of five commodity group price indices; see www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/wfs-home/foodpricesindex/en/.

[4] "Price Volatility in Food and Agricultural Markets: Policy Responses", FAO/OECD joint report to the Group of Twenty (G-20) (2 June 2011).

the international market has not risen because of generally good harvests in Asia, with stocks in many rice-importing countries higher now than in 2008.

10. Food price volatility has been exaggerated by the closer links between commodity (agricultural and energy) markets and the often speculative activities of financial investors. The financialization of commodity markets has increased significantly since about 2004, as reflected in rising volumes of financial investments in commodity derivatives markets. This phenomenon is a serious concern, because the activities of financial participants tend to drive commodity prices away from levels justified by market fundamentals, with negative effects both on producers and consumers.[5]

11. If higher prices are transmitted from world markets to the farm gate and if the necessary inputs and other services, including market access, are available, farmers should be able to benefit by producing and selling more. This applies particularly to poor farmers, including smallholders, in developing countries: if they are enabled to respond, and are assisted to manage any associated risks, they should be able to increase their incomes. But this would not necessarily lead to improved food and nutrition security for the poor, who have to pay higher prices. FAO released the *Guide for Policy and Programmatic Actions at Country Level to Address High Food Prices*[6] and, between March and July 2011, convened a series of two-day policy seminars at regional and subregional levels, helping countries develop their policy responses to higher food prices.

Vulnerability to extreme weather events and the effects of climate change

12. More than 38 million people were displaced by sudden-onset climate-related disasters in 2010, undermining their livelihoods and food security. Trends indicate that less predictable, extreme climate events are becoming the norm.[7] By 2050, as many as 20 per cent more people could be at risk of hunger owing to climate-related losses in productivity. Climate change could lead to 24 million additional malnourished children, with the majority in sub-Saharan Africa.[8]

13. The economic costs of climate-related disasters are significant. In sub-Saharan Africa in 2009, almost 90 per cent of economic losses from disasters were due to drought.[9] In many areas of the world where agricultural productivity is already low and the means of coping with adverse events are limited, climate change is expected to reduce productivity to even lower levels and make production more erratic. Long-term changes in the patterns of temperature and precipitation, which are part of climate change, are expected to shift production seasons, pest and disease patterns, and modify patterns of crop production, affecting prices, incomes, and, ultimately, livelihoods and lives.

[5] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Price Formation in Financialized Commodity Markets: The Role of Information*. Available at www.unctad.org/en/docs/gds20111_en.pdf.

[6] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Rome, January 2011).

[7] "Displacement due to natural hazard-induced disasters: Global estimates for 2009 and 2010", Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council (2011).

[8] G. C. Nelson et al. (2009), *Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Costs of Adaptation*, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C.

[9] E. Vos, J. Rodriguez, R. Below and D. Guha Sapir, *Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2009: the numbers and trends*. Brussels: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (2010).

14. Current research highlights strong links between drought risk and malnutrition: in Kenya, for example, children born in drought-affected areas are up to 50 per cent more likely to be stunted. The risk of malnutrition for children in Niger doubles during a drought. Climate change could lead to 24 million additional malnourished children, with the majority in sub-Saharan Africa.[8]

15. The most severe food and nutrition security emergency in the world is occurring in the eastern Horn of Africa, where one of the worst droughts since 1950 has caused crop failure and substantial livestock mortality, resulting in dramatically high food prices — up to 270 per cent higher in certain areas of Somalia.[10] Several United Nations agencies had issued warnings about a drought in the region, including in Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia, in September 2010, but the extent and severity of the drought became clear only in June and July 2011. Preparedness actions were proposed, but not adequately supported. These factors, along with persistent political conflict and a ban on foreign humanitarian aid by militant rebel groups, have spurred massive migrations both to the Somali capital Mogadishu, and into refugee camps within Kenya and Ethiopia. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that 30 to 40 per cent of children under the age of 5 are suffering from acute malnutrition on arrival. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network projects that food security is unlikely to improve this year, and the crisis is likely to become worse. As of July 2011, more than 13 million people in the subregion needed humanitarian assistance, and the current emergency response is inadequate to prevent further deterioration. This situation highlights the adverse impact of drought on lives and livelihoods in communities that are already impoverished and have limited resilience.[11]

16. Preserving and enhancing food and nutrition security requires an increase in the productivity of farming systems, increased resilience in the face of climate risk and capacity to withstand agro-ecological and socio-economic shocks. They are all interlinked with the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainable development. The recent report "Climate Change, Water and Food Security"[12] outlines actions needed to assist countries, in particular developing countries, in assessing probable climate change impacts on irrigated agriculture and on food production, and in adapting agricultural water management to cope with the range and depths of anticipated impacts.

Underinvestment in agriculture

17. National budgets are the primary source of public spending on agriculture, which has fallen to an average of around 7 per cent in developing countries, even less in Africa. The pattern is changing, especially through the Africa-wide approach of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme. Official development assistance (ODA) is an important source of public-sector investment for agriculture growth; however, it typically forms only about 15 per cent of total public expenditure in the sector. ODA to agriculture in developing countries has declined since the late 1980s: the share of official development assistance going to agriculture has fallen to as little as 3.8 per cent (though this, too, has started to rise

[10] See FEWS NET, "East Africa: Past year one of the driest on record in the eastern Horn", 14 June 2011. Available at www.fews.net.

[11] See www.fews.net.

[12] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011).

again). Commercial bank lending and foreign direct investment for agriculture in developing countries is also small; it represents less than 10 per cent of total bank lending in sub-Saharan Africa.[13]

18. In 2007, the level of investment in agriculture was estimated at $189 billion, three quarters of which is private investment. An estimated annual investment of $279 billion, including $208 billion in private investment, would be required to meet food demand in 2050. If ODA and foreign direct investment increase in proportion to the required amount of private investment, then ODA to agriculture would need to increase to $12 billion per year and foreign direct investment in developing country agriculture would increase to $4 billion per year. To reduce hunger by half by 2015 and eliminate hunger completely by 2025, FAO estimates that total public investment in developing country agriculture would need to increase to $120 billion per year. If ODA to agriculture continued to increase in proportion to domestic government expenditures, it would rise to $20 billion per year. Alternatively, if ODA increased to 0.7 per cent of donor countries' gross domestic product (GDP), as previously committed, and if agriculture's share of ODA increased to 17 per cent, as seen in the early 1980s, ODA to agriculture would rise to $44 billion per year. For the moment, and despite the mounting evidence of food insecurity catalysing civil unrest, there is scant evidence that ODA will rise sufficiently to meet this challenge.

Progress in reducing hunger

19. Millennium Development Goal 1 targets to reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, while the 1996 World Food Summit goal is to reduce by half the number of these people, by 2015. The total number of people suffering from hunger in the world reached more than 1 billion in 2009. While the numbers of undernourished declined to about 925 million in 2010, much remains to be done to reach the Millennium Development Goal 1 hunger target. In the developing world, the prevalence of undernutrition affects one in six people (16 per cent in 2010, down from 18 per cent in 2009). This is still well above the target set by Millennium Development Goal 1. Food security is being threatened anew by higher and more volatile food prices since late 2010.

20. The vast majority of the world's undernourished people — 98 per cent — live in the developing world. Two thirds of these live in just seven countries: Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. Over 40 per cent live in China and India alone. Projections for 2010 indicated that the pace of the decline in the number of undernourished people is very uneven among developing regions. The region with the most undernourished people continues to be Asia and the Pacific, with 578 million in 2010.[14] In addition, about 23 per cent of children are underweight in the developing world.

21. As of the 2005-2007 period (the most recent period for which complete country-level data are available), some countries, including Armenia and Viet Nam in Asia, achieved the Millennium Development Goal 1 hunger target, while China

[13] "Price Volatility in Food and Agricultural Markets: Policy Responses", FAO/OECD (3 May 2011).

[14] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* (Rome, 2010).

and others are on track. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Guyana, Jamaica and Nicaragua have achieved Millennium Development Goal 1 and Brazil and others are approaching the hunger reduction target. The proportion of undernourished people remains highest in sub-Saharan Africa, at 30 per cent in 2010, but progress varies widely at the country level. As of the 2005-2007 period, the Congo, Ghana, Mali and Nigeria had achieved the Millennium Development Goal 1 hunger target, and Ethiopia and others were close to achieving it. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, the proportion of undernutrition had risen to 69 per cent, up from 26 per cent in the 1990-1992 period.[14]

22. In spite of progress achieved in many countries, fragile States and many sub-Saharan countries still lag significantly in achieving the Millennium Development Goal 1 target, either because of poor initial conditions (e.g., low income levels or weak institutional conditions) or unfavourable development conditions often linked to protracted crisis. In 2010, FAO and WFP identified a total of 22 countries to be in protracted crisis situations, which are characterized by recurrent natural disasters, conflict, longevity of food crises, breakdown of livelihoods and insufficient institutional capacity to react to the crises.[14]

23. Given the high levels of food and nutrition insecurity and regular recurrence of food crises in the Horn of Africa and other areas, Governments, regional bodies and the international community are increasingly attempting to follow a twin-track comprehensive approach to food security, combining their responses to immediate needs with longer-term actions in order to address structural causes, increase capacity for managing disaster risk and build more resilient livelihoods and food production systems.[1]

III. Short-term safety nets

24. Nutrition interventions, emergency food assistance and safety nets play an important role in meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable and high-risk populations and in stabilizing their situation. Interventions should be based on food and nutrition security assessments and take country-level needs and capacities into account.

25. A report prepared in May 2011 by the World Bank and other members of the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis assesses the progress of countries' efforts to protect groups that are food insecure, vulnerable to the effects of high and volatile food prices, and at risk of undernutrition, highlighting well-designed and executed social protection programmes in Brazil, Mexico and Ethiopia that have reduced the risks of hunger and malnutrition and mitigated impacts of price rises, while creating development opportunities, building human capital and encouraging economic growth. Cambodia and Indonesia are in the process of establishing similar systems, and evidence suggests that even modest safety net systems provide a springboard for intervention in crisis.[15]

26. Experience shows that labour-based (food or cash-for-work) short-term safety nets programmes can buffer communities from shocks and stabilize situations

[15] "Nutrition Interventions for the Most Vulnerable and Access to Humanitarian Supplies: Progress and Prospects", World Bank and the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (June 2011).

during seasonal shortages and in times of scarcity. Many of these interventions have a dual effect, by helping people meet their immediate food needs while enabling food insecure small-scale and marginalized farmers to generate new assets and provide incentive for investments in long-term resilience and productivity, a risk they otherwise could not take. The WFP-supported Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transitions to More Sustainable Livelihoods programme in Ethiopia aims to increase the ability to manage shocks, meet necessary food needs and diversify livelihoods through sustainable land management, and institutionalize sustainable land management practices and systems at community level and replicate to other areas. The combination of sustainable land management practices with productivity and income-generating technologies has benefited over 600,000 people who have re-established their control over landscapes, resources and livelihoods, moving away from hunger and food insecurity.

27. Other targeted safety nets such as school feeding programmes alleviate hunger while supporting education, health, gender and community development. During economic shocks, such as those related to increasing food prices, or during protracted crises, school feeding becomes an effective safety net to sustain livelihoods and prevent those affected from adopting negative coping strategies. When linked with local purchases, school feeding programmes may increase the incomes of small-scale farmers and stimulate local development. Where school feeding is most needed, however, programmes are still largely supported by external funding. The challenge is to transition from externally assisted to nationally owned and funded programmes.[16] Inclusion of locally sourced foodstuffs decreases the costs of the food basket and allows for local purchases and smooth government takeover; it also generates savings that can be used to expand coverage and increase the food basket. To date, 37 countries have successfully taken over school feeding programmes from WFP.[17]

28. The World Bank Global Food Crisis Response Programme provides rapid assistance in the poorest and most vulnerable countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, including stimulating short-term food production and fiscal space to allow reductions in import tariffs or suspension of custom duties or taxes on food, to mitigate the impact of higher prices. The Programme has currently allocated $1.5 billion to 44 countries, benefiting nearly 40 million people. It is authorized to expedite processing of up to $760 million of existing funds of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association through the end of 2011, with the possibility that this is extended through 2012.

29. The European Union Food Facility, launched with €1 billion in 2009, provides a quick and substantial response to the food crisis with a two-year programme to help developing countries move towards long-term food security. Set up in close collaboration with the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, the Food Facility focuses on programmes that will have a quick but lasting impact on

[16] See Donald Bundy, Carmen Burbano, Margaret Grosh, Aulo Gelli, Matthew Jukes and Lesley Drake, "Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector", International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank/WFP (2009). Available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099080042112/DID_School_Feeding.pdf.

[17] See "Two minutes to learn about: School Meals". Available at http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp220221.pdf.

food security, with projects embedded in government policies for food and nutrition security and poverty reduction.

IV. Long-term sustainable development

30. While the international community works to respond quickly to short-term food and nutrition security needs, it must address the underlying issue of how to support countries' efforts to develop sustainable agriculture for long-term food and nutrition security, including markets that accommodate smallholder farmers, especially women. A strong "second track" reduces the need for "first track" emergency measures. Follow-up actions to implement decisions of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development pertaining to agriculture and rural development must be strengthened.[18]

31. Successful approaches to long-term sustainable agriculture are integrated with many different dimensions of development and policymaking, include relevant stakeholders, and incorporate a gender perspective.[19] Women are the majority of smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs, and they carry much of the burden of providing for and nourishing the household, and caring for those who are dependent on others. Compared with men, women have less access to productive resources, opportunities and services. Households headed by women face the greatest challenges.

32. National plans for food and nutrition security must be nationally articulated, designed, owned, implemented and led.[20] Long-term food and nutrition security requires countries to invest in making social protection systems accessible, maintaining food availability through productive and sustainable farming systems, sustainably managing ecosystems, and improving international food markets. Well-functioning social protection systems can defend households and individuals against shocks and can be a vital component of strategies to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition, particularly among smallholder farmers (including pastoralists and fishers) who are already food-insecure. Therefore, Governments should invest in social protection to increase the resilience of livelihoods. Social safety nets should be already in place at the onset of a crisis and be promptly activated.

33. However, 80 per cent of the world still has no access to any type of social protection, and coverage of social safety nets. Additionally, market-based instrumeats, such as microcredit and insurance, are particularly low in the most vulnerable countries.

Market-based solutions and development of agriculture value chains

34. Value chain development involves bringing together and strengthening the business partnerships between the different players who produce, trade, process and market agricultural products. The most important challenge is to bring small farmers into value chains as reliable and profitable partners and link them to markets.

[18] See E/2009/29-E/CN.17/2009/19.

[19] See Bina Agarwal, "Food Crises and Gender Inequality", Department of Economic and Social Affairs Working Paper No. 107 (June 2011), ST/ESA/2011/DWP/107.

[20] See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, WSFS 2009/2 (November 2009).

Without small farmer-focused value chain development, increasing numbers of farmers will be sidelined and excluded from profitable markets and be trapped in subsistence production. Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture[21] projects in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Gambia are examples of efforts to strengthen farmers' organizations, improve value addition, and promote farmer-market linkages.

35. The WFP Purchase for Progress pilot initiative engages smallholder farmers more directly in selling, using WFP purchasing power to support the sustainable development of food and nutrition security systems and transform food and nutrition assistance into a productive investment in local communities. A coordinated package of support addresses constraints smallholders face along agricultural value chains and enhances prospects for success. Supported farmers develop capacity to increase productivity, sell to WFP, and meet the demands of formal markets.

36. The importance of small and medium agricultural enterprises is also well-recognized, owing to their significant contribution to employment generation, national output and exports and fostering new entrepreneurship. However, small and medium agricultural enterprises are currently struggling to compete with larger companies and the growing tide of imported food products in developing regions.

37. Foreign direct investment in agriculture by multinational corporations and others has been promoted as key to solving the food security problem, especially in Africa. It is claimed that it will help alleviate the world food crisis by tapping into a country's "unused" agricultural potential and providing poor countries with money, infrastructure and other resources that improve food security. Some countries are also seeking new land to plant crops to meet their own food needs. The International Food Policy Research Institute reports that foreign investors bought from 37 million to 49 million acres of land in developing countries between 2006 and mid-2009.[22]

38. Many fear that these land purchases could further destabilize the food security of some developing countries, as land sold to foreign investors cannot be used to produce food for local communities. Moreover, this trend is likely to lead to large-scale industrialized agricultural production — dislocating smallholder farmers in the developing world and exacerbating rural poverty and food insecurity.[23] IFAD and FAO have studied the economic implications of international land deals to provide some guidance to countries.[24]

39. In March 2010, FAO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), IFAD, and the African Development Bank, with the support of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and under the auspices of the African Union, held a high-level conference on the development of agribusiness and agro-industries in Africa in Abuja. The Conference launched the African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to have an agriculture sector in Africa that by the year 2020 is made up of highly productive and profitable agriculture value chains that effectively link small and

[21] See www.fsca-pisa.org/.

[22] See "Buying farmland abroad: Outsourcing's third wave", *The Economist* (21 May 2009).

[23] See "Global Land Grab Undermines Food Security in the Developing World", Food & Water Watch, Fact Sheet, July 2009. Available at www.newscastmedia.com/GlobalLandGrab.pdf.

[24] See "Land grab or development opportunity? Agricultural investment and international land deals in Africa". Available at www.ifad.org/pub/land/land_grab.pdf.

medium-size agricultural producers to markets, supply higher-valued food, fibre, feed and fuel products, contribute to increasing farmers' incomes, utilize natural resources in a sustainable manner and generate increased and high-quality employment.[25]

40. At the behest of the African Development Bank, FAO reviewed post-harvest food losses and food loss programmes in Africa, and developed, in collaboration with the World Bank and the University of Greenwich Natural Resources Institute, a framework for food loss reduction programmes that moves away from the long-standing preoccupation with farm-level post-harvest management and storage. There is a groundswell of interest in food loss reduction programmes; an effective way to move forward is to address food losses through the agricultural value chains.

Natural resources management

41. Sound water management in agriculture will need to cope with less water per hectare of land and will also have to internalize the cost of pollution from agricultural land. Policy incentives that focus on the most pressing environmental externalities, while leveraging individual farmer's profit motives, have a greater chance of success. Solutions for sound water management in agriculture are more likely to be knowledge-rich than technology-intensive. Infrastructure is needed for developing water harvesting facilities and methods to make better use of rainfall.

42. In order to respond to the urgent need for governance of land and water resources in a context of increasing pressure on these resources, FAO has developed tools such as participative mapping of natural resources, geo-referenced data and Global Positioning System (GPS). Improvement of land-use planning also relies on the constitution of national task forces that involve all categories of stakeholders in order to strengthen institutional capacities to effectively regulate land use in concerned countries. FAO programmes in several regions assist smallholder farmers in improving livelihoods through improved management of existing cropping systems and the diversification of those systems to create additional livelihood opportunities and integrate communities into markets.

Urban/rural linkages

43. Enhancing food security among the urban poor and other vulnerable groups has become an increasing challenge in cities experiencing increasing populations and migration, economic crises and natural disasters. Through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, United Nations agencies are working with humanitarian partners on assessment, livelihood support and multi-stakeholder interventions to enhance food and nutrition security in cities, with local authorities in the driving seat. Priority is increasingly given to sustainable urban development and more effective urban/rural linkages.

44. Urban and peri-urban horticulture is the cultivation of a wide range of crops within cities and towns and in the surrounding areas. While the urban poor, particularly those arriving from rural areas, have long practised horticulture as a livelihood and survival strategy, in many countries the sector is still largely

[25] The African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative Framework is available at www.hlcd-3a.org/data_all/PDF_en/a3ADI_progFram1.pdf.

informal, usually precarious and sometimes illegal. The Growing Greener Cities Programme[26] supports the development of urban and peri-urban horticulture, with the goal of enhancing the efficiency of small-scale production activities and the quality and safety of their produce.

Forestry, fisheries and livestock

45. Efforts to ensure food and nutrition security must incorporate all aspects of agriculture. Improving animal production services and supporting sustainable livestock practices is essential, particularly for smallholders employing integrated crop-livestock systems. Agroforestry can greatly reduce greenhouse gases (GHG), accounting for one third of the estimated total GHG abatement potential until 2030.[27] Increasing attention has been given to agroforestry in the global arena, including the convening of the Second World Congress of Agroforestry (Kenya, August 2009), the First Africa Drylands Week (Dakar, June 2011), and the development by FAO of international guidelines for agroforestry.

46. Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are also crucial to food security. In 2008, the world consumed 115 million tons of fish, and demand is expected to rise. Employment in fisheries and aquaculture has grown faster than the world's population and employment in traditional agriculture. In 2008, almost 45 million people were directly engaged in the sector. Add to these the important secondary sectors such as handling and processing, and women represent half of those involved. Altogether, including the family dependants of these workers, fisheries and aquaculture support the livelihoods of about 540 million people.[14]

Early warning systems

47. Strengthening the ability of the agricultural sector to predict, prevent and address the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events is a critical component of the efforts to address food and nutrition security. Integrated food security early warning systems allow for predicting and preventing some of the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, linking weather index insurance with traditional risk management and social protection schemes. These strategies represent an important shift from managing disasters to managing risks, increasing the cost-effectiveness of food and nutrition security interventions.

48. UNESCO's Climate Frontlines is an interagency platform on traditional knowledge and climate change. It brings together United Nations agencies with expertise in small island developing States, traditional knowledge and indigenous peoples to promote the inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge in climate change adaptation policy. Notably, it supports a network of community-based research projects that provide data on how vulnerable communities are observing and coping with the impacts of climate change. The majority of these projects focus

[26] See www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/.

[27] Ulrich Hoffmann, "Assuring Food Security in Developing Countries under the Challenges of Climate Change: Key Trade and Development Issues of a Fundamental Transformation of Agriculture", UNCTAD Discussion Paper No. 201, UNCTAD/OSG/DP/2011/1 (February 2011).

on the impacts of climate change of food production systems, including agriculture, pastoralism, fishing and soil management.[28]

49. FAO assists member countries in strengthening institutional and technical capacity necessary to assess impacts of climate variability and climate change on the agriculture sector. Tools and methods being developed and delivered at the country level include a crop monitoring toolbox, rainfall estimate routine, the Modelling System for Agriculture Impacts of Climate Change, and Farm Adaptive Dynamic Optimization. The disaster-risk management approach is also used to prevent, prepare for and mitigate impacts of extreme weather events.[29]

50. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme is another country-level example that aims to shift millions of chronically food-insecure rural people from recurrent emergency food aid to a more secure and predictable form of social protection that can help propel people out of hunger and poverty. As part of the national food security programme, the Government of Ethiopia partnered with WFP and the World Bank to improve its capacity to manage drought and flood risk by developing an innovative integrated national risk management framework through the Livelihoods, Early Assessment and Protection project, which supports national risk finance and management frameworks by linking early warning, contingency planning and capacity-building to a $160 million contingency fund.[30]

Building on consultations with key stakeholders

51. Multi-stakeholder approaches are at the centre of successful efforts to achieve long-term sustainable development. The expansion of agricultural productivity and the development of vibrant rural economies will require global attention to promoting empowerment and participation in partnerships by relevant government departments and elements of civil society, including food producer associations and organizations of consumers, workers and employers, women and men farmers, youth, indigenous people, urban poor and people living with disabilities and chronic disease, scientific and research bodies, regional and international organizations, development banks and the private sector.

52. Understanding and maintaining the inextricable relationships between peoples and their cultures, biodiversity, traditional livelihood and knowledge systems are critical factors in ensuring the food and nutrition security of indigenous peoples. Reduced access to land and natural resources, environmental degradation, climate change, globalization and the westernization of diet and lifestyle have dramatically affected the role traditional foods play in indigenous societies. Although many traditional food practices have been lost, there is still scope to recover and strengthen local food systems so that indigenous peoples can continue to reap the benefits of their long-standing traditions.

53. Adequate policies and programmes are needed to promote youth involvement in agriculture and development of the rural economy, to boost the image of

[28] See www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/links/climate-change-adaptation/projects/climate-frontlines/.

[29] See "Disaster Risk Management in food and agriculture", Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Available at ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i0772e/i0772e00.pdf.

[30] World Food Programme, Niels Balzer and Ulrich Hess, "Climate change and weather risk management: evidence from index-based insurances schemes", *Revolution: From Food Aid to Food Assistance: Innovations in Overcoming Hunger* (2010).

agriculture and make it more desirable for young people. The IFAD Strategic Framework for 2011-2015 seeks to do this by creating viable opportunities for youth in rural economies and has adopted the issue of youth development as the theme for the 2011 Governing Council.

V. Strategic coordination and effective collaboration

54. While Governments are responsible for food and nutrition security at the country level, the United Nations supports and complements national efforts. United Nations Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators work with all relevant United Nations agencies in their respective countries to determine and implement the appropriate mix of actions for a comprehensive food security strategy that involves host Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, and resident donor representatives.

High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action

55. The rapid rises in food prices and threats posed to food security in 2008 propelled the international community to take action to protect world food security and nutrition for all. In April 2008, the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis was established as a coordination mechanism and catalyst for the United Nations system. Chaired by the Secretary-General with the Director General of FAO as Vice-Chair, the Task Force brings together 22 organizations, funds, programmes and departments within the United Nations family, including the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the OECD.

56. The High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis promotes a comprehensive and unified approach to the challenge of achieving global food and nutrition security through the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action.[31] This approach provides a response to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, as well as a contribution to longer-term resilience (the "twin-tracks to food and nutrition security"). It prioritizes sustainable agriculture, better ecosystem management, gender equity, the prerequisites for improved nutrition and the human rights of those least able to enjoy their right to food. It calls for joint actions to address all aspects of food and nutrition security — availability, access, stability and utilization — as a whole. It acknowledges that, while States have the primary role in ensuring food and nutrition security for all, a multiplicity of other actors have vital contributions to make. In 2011 a summary version of the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action was prepared as an easy-to-read concise document that highlights the concepts and principles of the framework.[31]

L'Aquila Food Security Initiative

57. In July 2009 at the L'Aquila Group of Eight (G-8) Summit, the G-8 and other partners (Australia, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden) committed $22 billion towards food security over three years, which promised to help reverse the overall decline of aid and investment to the agricultural sector. They channelled these funds through the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative. However, of the total pledged, only

[31] Available at www.un-foodsecurity.org.

$6.1 billion is additional to previously planned expenditures. Notably, $1.5 billion of the total is allocated to development food aid and food security, which was not a focus of the pledge. It is expected that the majority of funds pledged under the Initiative will be administered through bilateral funding channels. The OECD-Development Assistance Committee has noted that although there are technical difficulties in accessing the exact figures of disbursements by the different donors, they are mainly on track in delivering their commitments, despite perceptions to the contrary.

Actions by G-20

58. G-20 appears to be driving actions for greater food security. At its summit meeting in Seoul in November 2010, G-20 leaders produced a Multi-Year Action Plan on Development that committed to enhance food security policy coherence and coordination and increase agricultural productivity and food availability.[32] G-20 leaders requested that FAO, IFAD, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), OECD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), WFP, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization work with key stakeholders to develop options for G-20 consideration on how to better mitigate and manage the risks associated with the price volatility of food and other agriculture commodities, without distorting market behaviour, ultimately to protect the most vulnerable. The report "Price Volatility in Food and Agricultural Markets: Policy Responses" (May 2011) provided recommendations that were subsequently adopted by the G-20 agriculture ministers at their meeting in June 2011, including agreement to:

(a) Strengthen the longer-term productivity, sustainability and resilience of the food and agriculture system worldwide, as well as support agricultural research and innovation and create the enabling environment to encourage public and private investment in agriculture;

(b) Launch the Agricultural Market Information System to increase collaboration between international organizations, major food exporting and importing countries and the private sector;

(c) Encourage G-20 finance ministers to take the appropriate decisions for a better regulation and supervision of agricultural futures and derivative markets;

(d) Bring the Doha Development Round to a successful conclusion and agree to remove export restrictions or taxes on food purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes;

(e) Support the development by WFP of a pilot project for a regional emergency humanitarian food reserves system, consistent with World Trade Organization rules, in partnership with the countries concerned;

(f) Encourage international organizations and multilateral and regional development banks to further explore counter-cyclical mechanisms to assist low-income food-deficit countries during food price surges;

(g) Support the efforts to provide vulnerable households, communities and Governments with effective, market-based risk management instruments.

[32] See G-20 Seoul Summit Leaders' Declaration, November 2010, para. 51 (e). Available at www.g20.org/Documents2010/11/SeoulSummit_declaration.pdf.

59. The Agricultural Market Information System was also launched in June 2011, and will hold its inception meeting in September 2011. It is a network of countries, organizations and the private sector, including FAO, IFAD, the International Food Policy Research Institute, OECD, UNCTAD, WFP, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. It will provide a global food market early warning system that will issue alerts to price surges and help ensure better preparedness and more rapid and consistent policy responses in times of crisis through providing appropriate policy guidance and promoting policy coordination when the market situation and outlook indicates a high food security risk.

Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme

60. The Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme is a Financial Intermediary Fund administered by the World Bank designed to address the underfunding of country and regional agriculture and food security strategic investment plans already being developed by countries. The total amount pledged by donors to the Programme, equivalent to $925 million, is allocated to the Public and Private Sector Windows. To date, it has awarded grants to 12 countries, with a total value of $481 million, under two calls for proposals.

61. The resources received from donors as of June 2011 amount to $520.2 million for the Public Sector Window, representing 56 per cent of the total pledge. Donors include Australia, Canada, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Republic of Korea, Spain and the United States. Ireland has contributed to the operating costs of the programme. No further invitation for applications for grants will be offered until additional funding is committed to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme account.

Reform of the Committee on World Food Security

62. The reformed Committee on World Food Security aims to create an inclusive multi-stakeholder platform where key actors work together in support of country-led processes to ensure food and nutrition security for all. The roles of the Committee include coordinating a global approach to food and nutrition security; promoting policy convergence and coherence; supporting and advising countries and regions; coordinating action at national and regional levels; promoting accountability and sharing best practices; and developing a global strategic framework for food and nutrition security.

63. The reform is guided by principles of inclusiveness, strong linkages to the field to ensure the process is based on a realistic situation on the ground, and flexibility in implementation so that the Committee can respond to a changing external environment and membership needs. The key features of the reform are expanded participation in the Committee to ensure that voices of all relevant stakeholders are heard in the policy debate on food and agriculture; increased focus on intersessional activities; strengthened linkages at regional, national and local levels; and inclusion of structured expertise through the creation of a high-level panel of experts on food and nutrition security.

64. The Committee on World Food Security submitted a progress report to the Economic and Social Council in July 2011,[33] providing updates on monitoring of events affecting food price volatility, the development of voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land and other natural resources, development of a global strategic framework on food and nutrition security, the work of the high-level panel of experts on food and nutrition security, improving mapping of food and nutrition security actions at the country level, increasing engagement of the private sector in activities of the Committee, and round tables to review methods of hunger measurement.

Strengthened collaboration among FAO, IFAD and WFP

65. The economic and financial crises, food and nutrition security crisis, climate change and volatility of food prices have provided new impetus for strengthening cooperation among the Rome-based agencies. Increasingly, FAO, IFAD and WFP coordinate their activities at policy, operational and administrative levels, and agree that collaboration should be pursued in the context of United Nations system-wide coherence, including under the "Delivering as One" pilots, in support of country-driven efforts and aligned with country priorities. Following the approval of the paper "Directions for Collaboration among the Rome-based Agencies",[34] collaboration on three areas has been undertaken since November 2009, including transition from relief to recovery and protracted crisis, Information Systems for Food and Nutrition Security, and communications. The gender units of the Rome-based agencies have also intensified their collaboration. A joint gender action plan was prepared covering research, advocacy, capacity development and coordination.

66. Through the joint IFAD/WFP Weather Risk Management Facility, WFP has been developing and evaluating weather index insurance tools for the community level. Following two microinsurance pilots in China and Ethiopia in 2009, the Facility is developing an innovative remote sensing-based weather index insurance approach for countries with limited weather infrastructure, which will be tested in Mali. Partnerships in weather insurance are being pursued and developed in Mali and other western African countries. In May 2010, under the Facility, WFP and IFAD jointly published a landmark study of 37 pilot weather index insurance projects to determine criteria for sustainable large-scale insurance projects.

Reform of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

67. The recent reform of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, supported by FAO, IFAD and the World Bank, adopted a results-based management approach for strategic planning, management and communications centred on continuous learning and accountability.

68. The new Strategic Results Framework of the Group establishes system-level outcomes that inform the design of the Group's research and research programmes that are the main organizational mechanism of the Group's research. The system-level outcomes are reducing rural poverty, improving food security, improving nutrition and health, and sustainable management of natural resources. The Group's research programmes make explicit the execution of Group research within a

[33] See A/66/76-E/2011/102.

[34] "Directions for Collaboration among the Rome-based Agencies", July 2009. Available at ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/017/k5126e.pdf.

framework that allows a clear linkage between investment in its research and its potential impact on development outcomes. Priority is increasingly given to responding to local needs, including applied and operational research, validating and disseminating field experience and good practices, and building capacity of national institutions.

69. Consistent with results-based financing, the new approach shifts both the funders' and researchers' focus from delivery of outputs to delivery of research and development outcomes while clarifying accountability and joint responsibility.

Scale Up Nutrition Movement

70. Investing in nutrition between pregnancy and a child's second birthday saves lives. It prevents a long-term and irreversible impact on intellectual, physical and social development. It makes economic sense, reducing the burden on health-care systems, increasing educational achievement and improving prosperity. In 2010, over 100 organizations, representing Governments, civil society, the private sector, research institutions and the United Nations system, committed to work together to fight hunger and undernutrition, developing a Framework to Scale Up Nutrition and a road map to provide the principles and direction for increased action.

71. Since the launch of the Scale Up Nutrition Movement at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010, 17 countries have been prioritizing food and nutrition security in their national programmes through nutrition and gender sensitive development that has nutritional outcomes as a key goal of their development policies in sectors such as agriculture, health, social protection and education. They are investing in direct nutrition interventions such as promoting antenatal nutrition, breastfeeding, food fortification and complementary feeding. The international community is aligning its support with country plans to scale up nutrition. Several of these countries, and stakeholders that are supporting them, will be participating in a high-level meeting in New York to review progress in September 2011.

North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation

72. Solutions for sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security are increasingly shared and scaled up through South-South and triangular cooperation. Recently, for example, India and the United States forged a triangular arrangement with Liberia, Malawi and Kenya to promote food and nutrition security,[35] and a High-Level Meeting on South-South and Triangular Cooperation was convened in November 2010 by the United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the International Labour Organization and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, with a focus on meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

73. Many South-South cooperation agreements have been organized by FAO to improve food and nutrition security within poor households and increase food production, providing expert technicians who work directly in the field and provide hands-on training to researchers, extensionists and farming communities in recipient countries. These have been instrumental in convincing local and national authorities of the value of disseminating innovative technologies on a much wider scale. In the past 15 years, FAO has supported South-South cooperation programmes in more

[35] "US, India to Collaborate on Food Security in Africa", *Economic Times*, 20 July 2011.

than 40 countries, and over 1,500 experts and technicians have been fielded for durations of one to three years, among which 800 were fielded by the People's Republic of China. Under FAO's Strategic Alliance with China, training courses for African experts are planned to take place in Chinese research and training centres.

Regional coordination

74. Food and nutrition security is a key development outcome through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the African Union, which, together with Africa's regional economic commissions, has stimulated multi-stakeholder efforts for country and subregional compacts and investment plans. To date, some 26 countries have completed Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme compacts and 16 have prepared and peer reviewed national agriculture investment plans.[36]

75. Regional coordination in the management of emergency food stocks, especially in the Horn of Africa, needs to be capable of handling multicountry issues and ensuring that cross-border interventions are timely and effective. Coordination should build on existing mechanisms. This should include strengthening the capacities of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other regional actors. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Plan of Action for the Horn of Africa, developed by FAO, WFP and Oxfam in October 2010, remains valid as a guide for action, though it may need to be updated.[37]

VI. Conclusion

76. **Agriculture development and food and nutrition security are complex sustainable development issues. Efforts to promote "green" or "climate-smart" ways of enhancing food production must be complemented by efforts to ensure access to food and sustainable development pathways. National Governments must do more to implement the decisions of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.**

77. **Agriculture and food and nutrition security will remain high on the international agenda in 2011. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will provide a global opportunity to focus on these issues, and many are already exploring what the "green economy" theme implies for food and agriculture. To this end, the Netherlands has formed an informal group of friends on food and nutrition security, and FAO has launched a "greening the economy with agriculture" initiative to mobilize the food and agriculture sector for Rio+20, in the context of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.**

78. **Events linking agriculture and food and nutrition security with the green economy theme include a joint FAO/OECD expert meeting on "greening the economy with agriculture", to be held in Paris in September 2011; a ministerial dialogue on the theme "Green economy: integrating poverty eradication, food security and energy security" in New Delhi in October 2011; and an**

[36] See www.nepad-caadp.net/.

[37] Notes from the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis Senior Steering Group Meeting; Special Meeting on the Horn of Africa, June 2011.

international conference in Bonn in November 2011 to examine the nexus of water, energy and food security.

79. A comprehensive approach to meeting the 2015 target for reducing the world's hungry by half will require concerted effort by the international community to stay focused on scaling up successful approaches to sustainable development, mobilizing all stakeholders, and ensuring that funding pledges are fulfilled. With increasingly coordinated actions and a twin-track and comprehensive approach, reaching the agreed goal by 2015 remains possible.

United Nations A/66/278

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 August 2011

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Item 19 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy were adopted to assist small island developing States to achieve sustainable development goals in line with the implementation of Agenda 21. In the years following the adoption of the two landmark documents, small island developing States have faced challenges in their implementation. These challenges reflect the structural disadvantages and special characteristics of those countries, as well as the global financial, food, energy and environmental crises that have hit them especially hard and exposed their various vulnerabilities.

The present report provides a summary of the views and recommendations received from Member States, experts and United Nations entities on how some of the key vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States could be effectively addressed.

* A/66/150.

11-44750 (E) 240811

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 65/2 the General Assembly adopted the outcome document of the High-level Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in New York on 24 and 25 September 2010 to undertake a five-year review of the Strategy. In the outcome document, various challenges and constraints faced by small island developing States in achieving sustainable development were acknowledged.

2. In the outcome document the Secretary-General was requested to submit a report putting forward concrete recommendations to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy, and refocus efforts towards a results-oriented approach. That mandate was the first of its kind to call for measures to address vulnerabilities of small island developing States as opposed to merely recognizing the vulnerabilities.

3. The present report was prepared jointly with several relevant United Nations entities, and reflects input received from Member States and United Nations system organizations. The report is structured around the key categories of vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States as highlighted by the High-level Review Meeting. It also contains a number of concrete but preliminary recommendations, being mindful of the longer-term need to keep addressing these issues through continuous intergovernmental and inter-agency consultation, research and technical cooperation.

4. The Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy outlined the many challenges facing small island developing States that limit their potential to achieve sustainable development goals. The major challenges specific to small island developing States reflect their special characteristics and their vulnerability to external shocks and natural disasters, as well as their limited capacity to adapt and be resilient to such vulnerabilities.

5. The challenges facing small island developing States include a wide spectrum of issues. Structural disadvantages, environmental vulnerabilities, and insufficient data and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as heavy migration to other countries, have all had a significant impact on their sustainable development, as has the global financial crisis on small States in general. Whereas these facts do not tell the complete story, they do begin to address the deeper challenges facing small island developing States that hinder their ability to adapt to changes and crises that are often beyond their control.

6. Following the adoption of resolution 65/2, an interactive consultative process was undertaken within the United Nations system to consider concrete strategies to enhance the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. The present report highlights the recommendations made to address the means to overcome the constraints of small island developing States in achieving sustainable development.

II. Measures to more effectively address the vulnerabilities and development needs of small island developing States

A. Promoting climate change adaptation

7. Climate change impacts the physical characteristics of small island developing States and influences socio-economic trends in these countries, affecting their sustainable development prospects and their ability to implement the Mauritius Strategy. There is a need to scale up adaptation efforts within the context of sustainable development and enhance the capacity of the vulnerable countries to cope with, and adapt to, the adverse effects of climate change.

8. In order to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, parties agreed to a range of initiatives, including:

(a) The Cancun Adaptation Framework, which resulted from the negotiations on enhanced action on adaptation as part of the Bali Action Plan;

(b) The Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change, research and systematic observation under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice;

(c) The national adaptation programmes of action and the Buenos Aires programme of work on adaptation and response measures under the Subsidiary Body for Implementation.

9. These initiatives reinforce each other and build on the need for partnership and cooperation to address critical issues related to climate change. Vulnerability to climate change can become catastrophic for small island developing States, and the upcoming Conference of the Parties should be viewed as the opportunity for Member States to implement the agreements adopted in previous sessions, in particular the Cancun Adaptation Framework. This initiative would go a long way towards assisting small island developing States.

10. The objective of the Cancun Adaptation Framework is to enhance action on adaptation, including through international cooperation and coherent consideration of matters relating to adaptation under the Convention. Ultimately, the aim of enhanced action on adaptation is to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in the most vulnerable developing countries.

Security implications of climate change

11. Though relatively new, the concept of the security implications of climate change is an important aspect of the threat of climate change. There are environmental, socio-economic, political and legal dimensions to climate change and all have a potential impact on small island developing States.

12. On 20 July 2011, the Security Council discussed climate change and its possible security implications. The possibility of the existence of environmental refugees in the future was underscored, as was the need for climate finance. It was also felt that a significant challenge with respect to climate change was the inability to predict the magnitude of its acceleration and thus to adapt to its unknown impacts.

13. The discussions at the United Nations have helped to highlight the severity of the issue for small island developing States, particularly when considering the destabilizing effect that sea-level rise, food insecurity, soil erosion, drought and environment-related migration have on countries with limited resources, limited space and sustainable development constraints. Addressing the potential security dimension of climate change on small island developing States is a proactive, preventative approach that will go a long way towards preserving the very existence of these countries.

14. Member States and the international community must prepare for the very real possibility of a security threat due to climate change. Further scientific research and preventative measures, as well as the development of a legal framework to protect persons destabilized by climate change, are necessary to help to offset any socio-economic and political crises that may occur if this potential threat were to become a reality.

15. Within the international arena, collection of data, trends analysis and other related studies will need to be carried out by all relevant agencies to examine the impact thus far and project potential occurrences. This should be pursued within the realm of food security, migration, and possible conflict over scarce resources, along with climate change and sustainable development.

B. Strengthening disaster risk management capabilities in small island developing States

16. The natural hazards that often affect small island developing States include hurricanes, volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, drought and heavy rains. Most of the countries are also threatened by sea-level rise. In the last decade, small island developing States have suffered great loss of life and livelihood from natural disasters. The impact of such events on livelihoods can be quite devastating; in the worst cases, the economic impact has exceeded 100 per cent of gross domestic product. Even if the impact of an event is smaller, the repeated effect of many events over time erodes development.

17. With few exceptions, small island developing States are geographically vulnerable. Since most of their population and vital civil infrastructure pertaining to health and transportation are located near the coast or on flood plains, they are particularly exposed to natural hazards. Furthermore, their small size limits the options that island populations have in terms of avoidance of hazards through relocation.

18. Moreover, a significant proportion of the population of small island developing States is vulnerable to natural hazards because of poverty or because the country they live in has a small economy or overwhelmed governance mechanism. Frequently, the main economic activities are carried out in the coastal zone and are thus exposed to a variety of hazards. Small island developing States are also vulnerable to anthropogenic hazards. Their shift from agriculture-based to tourism-based economies has resulted in more passenger and cargo traffic, raising the risk of oil and chemical spills. About 25 per cent of world oil tanker traffic passes through the Caribbean, for example.

19. Although the Governments of small island developing States have become more involved in disaster management activities, the development of measures to reduce disaster risk is hindered by low employment, high levels of indebtedness, loss of preferred markets and a dearth of economic activities beyond tourism. Once a disaster occurs, funds earmarked for development activities are often diverted to immediate humanitarian relief, cleanup and rebuilding.

20. Despite frequently occurring hazards and the vulnerability of small island developing States, it is possible to reduce disaster risk. While it is not possible to reduce the occurrence of meteorological hazards, their ill effects can be reduced by reducing exposure or vulnerability and building resilience. For non-anthropogenic hazards, risk management is achieved by focusing on lessening exposure and vulnerability. This may, in practical terms, mean that physical planners need to be aware of flood plains or the extent to which a storm surge may inundate the coast and that architects and builders may need to build houses on stilts or pitch roofs more steeply. Cuba has demonstrated proactive physical planning in adapting to environmental hazards, which allows it to lessen the impact to an extent.

21. Several key institutions have been established in small island developing States to address the challenges of natural disasters. Examples of these include the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency and the Disaster Reduction Programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. There is a need however, for more studies specific to the impact of disasters on small island developing States. Much data on hazards does not detail causes or long-term impacts.

22. Private insurance coverage of homes and businesses in small island developing States is low. In many cases Governments do not insure their buildings; nor do they routinely make other provisions for likely disaster-related losses. Even if facilities similar to CCRIF are established, Governments will need to develop contingency and continuity plans for small and medium-sized events.

23. Measures to improve physical planning and building techniques show the most promise in terms of reducing risk in a cost-effective manner. Such measures would be especially helpful against wind and floods. Storm surges, debris flow, earthquakes and volcanoes may require other strategies such as relocation and/or evacuation plans. Some events may not have solutions beyond evacuation. For risks that are manageable, buildings should be placed and designed accordingly. Coastal planning becomes a necessary activity and strict building zones should be enforced. Additionally, each country should establish or strengthen its disaster management plan.

C. Biodiversity

24. Biodiversity is a critical component of sustainable development that is of particular significance to small island developing States. It contributes to food security, human health and the availability of clean air and water; it also contributes to local livelihoods and economic development and is essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including poverty reduction, as indicated in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In small island developing States, biodiversity is threatened, among other things, by adverse effects of the introduction of invasive alien species, habitat fragmentation

and climate change. Ultimately, the causes of biodiversity erosion and loss lay in urbanization, inadequate utilization of science and technology and cultural factors.

25. The findings of scientific programmes and activities focusing on biodiversity and ecosystem services must be brought to the attention of policymakers, including possible policy responses. There is also a need to educate the public at large and promote stakeholder dialogue in support of sustainable sectoral planning that is compatible with the conservation and sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity.

26. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its ninth meeting, have identified six priority elements in the implementation of the programme of work on island biodiversity (decision IX/21, para. 6). Though not specific to small island developing States, these priority elements would be useful to them:

(a) Management and eradication of invasive alien species;

(b) Climate-change adaptation and mitigation activities;

(c) Establishment and management of marine protected areas;

(d) Capacity-building;

(e) Access to and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources;

(f) Poverty alleviation.

27. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties recognized the Global Island Partnership as one of the mechanisms to implement the island biodiversity programme of work.

28. Invasive alien species continue to be a major threat to all types of ecosystems and species, with particularly devastating effects on island communities and livelihoods. Strategies should be developed to strengthen and mobilize capacity on islands to address this threat.

29. The global SIDS-focused climate change education and coastal monitoring programme, Sandwatch, is currently active in more than 50 countries, including over 25 small island developing States. Sandwatch is a practical, hands-on process through which students record and measure detailed information about their local coastal environment, analyse and share their findings with others, and take action to ensure the sustainable management of local coastal resources.

30. Sandwatch, which was founded over a decade ago, today represents a well-established network of coastal monitoring teams, some with data on the coastal environments of small island developing States going back over 10 years. At the present time, a global Sandwatch database is under development that will allow Sandwatch practitioners to upload data in order to share and further analyse their findings. The Sandwatch database is expected to form a citizen-driven record of changes in coastal morphology, biodiversity, use and access, development and more.

31. A healthy environment is essential to livelihoods and food security. In this connection, the establishment of marine protected areas is particularly important. For example, the Coral Triangle Initiative, Caribbean Challenge, Micronesia Challenge, Western Indian Ocean Partnership and Phoenix Islands Protected Area represent regional and subregional approaches that unite a geographic cluster of

like-minded and ecologically connected island States. Many of them owe their establishment, to some degree, to the island biodiversity programme of work.

32. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme has in recent years seen the addition of several new coastal and marine biosphere reserves in small island developing States, including three new sites in the Micronesian subregion alone. These sites are linked with other existing and prospective coastal biosphere reserves through networks such as the Pacific Man and the Biosphere Network. Those networks, in turn, have cooperated actively with neighbouring sister networks, such as the Southeast Asian Biosphere Reserve Network, resulting in increased mutual exchange and South-South bilateral capacity-development activities.

33. Instruments such as the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its seventeenth session, on 16 November 1972, and its dedicated small island developing States and marine programmes, as well as several subregional research and management cooperation networks with a focus on small island developing States under the Man and the Biosphere programme, can directly support the design and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

34. Local action has also been important in these contexts. In various coastal and island regions, the use of community-based protected areas, in which local and indigenous peoples play a lead role in managing and conserving marine resources, is becoming increasingly widespread and has shown promising results.

Benefit-sharing

35. With their high level of endemism, islands are repositories of genetic information with an inherent value to humankind the world over. Island Governments have recognized access and benefit-sharing as priorities, and some Governments of small island developing States have made efforts to protect their genetic resources or to ensure that benefits from their use are shared locally. The recently adopted Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biodiversity will create greater legal certainty and transparency for island providers of genetic resources.

36. In view of the increasing role and importance of biodiversity and associated ecosystem services in development planning, regional cooperation and sustainable development strategies, small island developing States can benefit, within the larger framework of the Mauritius Strategy, from a number of initiatives, including:

(a) Promoting biodiversity-friendly economies and policy tools, such as payment for ecosystem services, to meet both development and biodiversity targets; there is a benefit to be gained by incorporating biodiversity in the promotion of green economy in the process of preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (Rio+20), as well as its blue aspects in relation to marine and coastal ecosystems;

(b) In-depth review of the programme of work on island biodiversity (to be addressed at the sixteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on

Biological Diversity, to be held in May 2012 in Montreal, Canada, as well as at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in October 2012 in Hyderabad, India. This review is an excellent opportunity for island countries and countries with islands to focus the attention of the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties on island biodiversity.

D. Addressing energy challenges

37. The almost total dependence of small island developing States on imported petroleum for their commercial energy needs continues to cause severe imbalances in trade, and the rising costs of petroleum imports have put a serious drain on limited national financial resources. Prices of petroleum products in small island developing States are among the highest in the world. This increase and those projected for the future will exert significant pressure on the economies of small island developing States.

38. The energy sector is the most critical sector for the vast majority of small island developing States and represents one of the major areas of economic vulnerability. Sustainable development of small island States is not possible without a highly integrated energy sector that is not dependent on external sources and that maintains synergistic linkages with the waste management, water supply, agriculture, tourism, transportation and employment sectors.

39. The largest single common renewable energy resource for all small island developing States is ocean energy in its various forms. However, the technology for utilizing this source of energy is still in development and thus expensive.

40. The development of renewable energy resources has been limited by the availability of appropriate technology and technical capacity, poor institutional mechanisms and the challenges of developing systems for small remote markets at reasonable cost. The renewable energy technologies available to small island developing States include hydropower and wind and solar power. Potential areas that may one day be pursued include ocean energy systems; waste-to-energy technologies; biomass algae (blue-green); solar water heaters; solar and seawater cooling systems; low carbon footprint buildings; ultra-low water consumption, sanitation and wastewater recycling systems; and electric transportation.

41. New technologies are available, but in different stages of development. However, the small island developing States lack the technical and market research expertise required to negotiate technology transfer, commercialization and the dissemination of innovative technologies and applications that contribute to a low carbon economy.

42. Since 1992, small island developing States have invested billions in their energy sector, very little of which has gone into renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation. In order for the countries to generate the financial resources needed to transform the energy sector, several options are available, including:

(a) Exploring the establishment of a special facility within the Climate Technology Centre, which is under development as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process, with special funding to support small island developing States in the assessment and identification of appropriate renewable energy technologies;

(b) Exploring seed funding to establish a sustainable energy development revolving fund that would be capitalized from various sources including the populations of small island developing States and the diaspora;

(c) Studying the feasibility of establishing national and regional energy bonds and energy funds to support energy efficiency and energy conservation investments in areas which are increasingly showing very profitable returns on investment and significant national economic benefits;

(d) Establishing and seeking international support for a technological expertise-sharing mechanism that would utilize unique expertise and generate additional financial benefits for the professionals involved. Such a mechanism could be implemented jointly through relevant United Nations specialized agencies or regional organizations with the required expertise and facilitated through the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNet) online platform.

43. Energy policies could be followed up by subsector policies to promote the development of appropriate types of renewable energy resources, energy efficiency initiatives and conservation policies. Policymaking should be recognized as a process rather than an event. There is need for greater policy coherence to ensure synergy between sectors that have significant impact and influence on the energy sector and socio-economic development.

44. In addition to financing, partnership initiatives to address the energy challenges can be useful. The objective is to consider different options which can be beneficial. The small island developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative (SIDS DOCK) is an example of a partnership that aims to effectively address the energy challenges of small island developing States. Additionally, the facilitation of new partnerships and the profiling of successful partnerships in small island developing States is one of the primary objectives of SIDSNet, which aims to provide a web-based platform for sharing experiences and expertise and establishing connections.

E. Addressing the economic structural disadvantages of small island developing States

45. Many small island developing States are vulnerable to trade-related shocks beyond domestic control not only because they may have experienced measurable shocks, such as a decrease in official development assistance and remittances, a contraction in industries with ties to external markets and an increase in unemployment, but also because of their small size and/or remoteness and limited opportunities for economic specialization. Such vulnerability is typical for economies that are highly dependent on one or a few exports, and where the products imported are highly susceptible to shocks.

46. One intermediate objective in support of the ultimate goal of building economic resilience has been recognized by organizations, programmes and entities of the United Nations system as deserving special attention, namely the need to reduce structural disadvantages, with particular reference to the handicaps resulting from smallness and remoteness, which have implications in terms of institutional capacities and economic efficiency. This intermediate objective points to areas to more effectively address the unique and particular vulnerabilities and development

needs of small island developing States, as contemplated by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/2.

47. For small island developing States, the following three areas of action to reduce structural disadvantages are particularly important:

(a) Development of the physical infrastructure, notably in the field of transport, with a view to mitigating the adverse impact of remoteness or smallness;

(b) Development of the human resource base of the economy to allow the knowledge component of productive capacities to develop in pace with that of growing competitors in the global economy. This would improve capacities of small island developing States to innovate and add value to products and exports in relevant global value chains;

(c) Building or strengthening institutional capacities to create the most favourable environment for structural progress. This area of action and that in paragraph 47 (b) are mutually supportive.

48. Each small island developing State, will need to determine its own optimum specialization mix. The small island developing States have a range of unique positive characteristics, including environmental beauty, cultural uniqueness and wealth, and exoticism associated with smallness (smallness can be an asset, as well as a liability). In addition, the wide prevalence of political stability and good governance among small island developing States is one of the strengths to be taken into account in the quest for an optimum specialization mix.

49. A sound economy will not immunize a small island developing State against natural disasters or economic shocks beyond its control, but may, by widening the productive base, result in greater economic resilience.

50. Service industries largely dominate the economies of small island developing States, with tourism standing out as the first source of export earnings in many of the countries; in 2009, the average share of service exports of total exports was 67 per cent in the 26 small island developing States for which relevant data are available.[1] International services other than tourism have risen significantly in the economic structure of most small island developing States. Financial and other business-related services are becoming promising areas of specialization for some States (e.g. Samoa, Seychelles, St. Kitts and Nevis and Vanuatu) and are established economic pillars in others (e.g. Bahamas, Barbados and Mauritius).

51. The growth of the service sector can serve as a catalyst to economic growth and development in general so that diversification becomes possible and, with it, opportunities for investing in and producing a wider range of products. Even with their often intrinsic disadvantages, small island developing States demonstrate potential for achieving economic growth and progress. In order to develop effective economic growth strategies, barriers and structural impediments must be overcome. As noted in paragraph 47 above, three areas of action are important in this respect:

[1] Data is available from the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Cape Verde, the Comoros, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mauritius, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu.

development of the physical infrastructure, development of the human resource base and strengthening institutional capacities.

F. Addressing food security

52. Food security continues to be one of the major concerns of small island developing States. In order to overcome the threat of food insecurity, risk management capabilities must be strengthened. Food security and protection of biodiversity have been addressed through a regional project on promoting CARICOM/CARIFORUM regional food security, with various national technical cooperation programmes in support of the project.

53. Small island developing States rely directly or indirectly on agriculture, forestry and fisheries for 80 per cent of their livelihoods. Traditional agriculture and food systems can provide resilience against external economic and natural shocks. High food and oil prices have led to a renewed emphasis on domestic production and food self-sufficiency. Small island developing States also depend on healthy oceans and marine conservation, making equitable sharing of the benefits of ocean resources of paramount importance.

54. Forests and trees have huge environmental, cultural and economic significance. Forests continue to provide significant wood products, but the value of the forests to the environment is increasingly being recognized.

55. There is considerable potential for aquaculture for domestic food production and for export trade in marine products, including pearls, shrimp, cultured corals and seaweed. Coastal fisheries resources, targeted by commercial and subsistence fishing, are now generally over-fished and subject to increasing pressure from growing populations.

56. Over-fishing is one of the contributors to the erosion of biodiversity. The loss of biodiversity undermines food, water and nutrition security, and is likely to produce higher levels of poverty. It will also increase dependency on food imports and impact the prospects for economic growth in the long term.

57. The transition to a green economy places a value on biodiversity capital and ecosystem goods and services, particularly food, and can become an important source of sustenance and income. Investment in a green economy thus will contribute to improving the capacity of small island developing States to produce their own food and limit their reliance on imports and vulnerability to food crises.

G. Promoting sustainable tourism

58. For most small island developing States, tourism is the main economic activity in terms of income generation, creation of employment, and foreign exchange earnings. However, owing to their small size, small island developing States are quite vulnerable to the negative environmental and social impacts that tourism can sometimes have. In addition, tourism is considered to be a highly climate-sensitive economic sector. The impact of climate change on the tourism sector is expected to intensify steadily. Small island developing States may be particularly affected, as the rising temperature of oceans has already caused coral bleaching, among other effects.

59. Tourism also relies heavily on the natural capital of intact and functioning ecosystems, not only to attract tourists but also to meet their desire for local food, activities and experiences. The tourism sector can also be a driver that demands more sustainable management and use of resources from the many production and service sectors that supply its needs.

60. It is therefore essential to plan, manage and monitor tourism development, with a view to ensuring its sustainability. It is also necessary to actively support the integration of climate change adaptation criteria into national tourism planning processes.

61. Small island developing States are very vulnerable to climate change impacts and have low adaptive capacity; they should therefore be given particular attention. Initiatives such as the CARIBSAVE Partnership and the proposed Pacific Green Growth Roadmap have shown some potential. Such initiatives are necessary in other regions in order to pursue the relevant strategies to achieve sustainable tourism.

62. Some small island developing States have explored creative proactive ways of promoting tourism, such as specialized tourism — for example, medical tourism in Cuba and Mauritius, spa tourism which is expanding in many countries, eco-tourism promoting bird watching, and cultural tourism. These strategies are useful in diversifying the tourism product while also contributing to the preservation of the environment. They also add to the local economies by being both supply and demand factors in a country's gross domestic product. Additional financing and increased partnerships with the public and private sectors to enhance sustainable tourism will enable countries to maintain their competitiveness in a market that has diminished following the international crises of recent years.

H. Achieving debt sustainability

63. High and increasing debt burden in some small island developing States has been a persistent and unresolved problem for some time. There is evidence that debt stocks have significantly worsened since the global economic and financial crisis began. Structural constraints, such as a large exposure to external shocks, a small population base, a limited export base and a public sector that serves as an important source of income and employment for many families, mean that strategies to deal with the debt burden have enjoyed limited success. Several small island developing States are heavily dependent on official development assistance. However, official development assistance has been heavily skewed towards just a few countries, and low levels of aid to other small island developing States have exacerbated a dependence on more volatile and expensive market-based forms of external financing.

64. In contrast to many other developing countries, most small island developing States have not benefited from international debt relief measures such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative or the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. Debt relief, where extended, has helped to reduce the debt burden considerably in beneficiary countries. The high (and rising) public debt burden in many small island developing States has remained largely unaddressed thus far by the international policy community. This problem is exacerbated by low levels of economic growth in many small island developing States, which are recovering from the global financial

and economic crisis more slowly than the rest of the world, as measured by forecasts of economic growth over the next few years.

65. Several small island developing States benefit from concessional finance from the major multilateral lenders under the "small island exception", in recognition of the particular development challenges such countries face. For several countries, the multilateral financial institutions remain the major lending partner. Nevertheless, some small island countries do not benefit from this exception. There is evidence to suggest that concessional debt as a proportion of total public debt has declined considerably in many small island developing States over the last decade. This has been substituted with private external and/or domestic debt, which is frequently more expensive.

66. Heavy domestic borrowing by the State can crowd out credit available to the private sector, which in turn can stifle private sector development and economic growth. It can also be more difficult to restructure because a sovereign default on domestic debt can often be followed by a domestic banking crisis. In view of small island developing States' numerous structural vulnerabilities to external shocks, the suitability of market-based finance to support their economic development can be questioned.

67. The Governments of small island developing States can take steps to improve debt management capacities and to reduce inefficiency and waste in public expenditure. Debt relief may also be required by some small island developing States. This must be combined with an end to the reverse in aid flows to many small island developing States. The criteria for access to concessional resources from the major multilateral financial institutions should be revised to take into consideration structural constraints to development, as faced by many of the countries. Finally, innovative financing mechanisms such as counter-cyclical loan instruments and debt swaps may be desirable for many small island developing States given their vulnerability to external shocks.

I. Recommendations from Member States, United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations

68. In compliance with resolution 65/2, the Secretary-General wrote to Member States, United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations[2] for recommendations on enhancing the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

[2] Replies were received from the Alliance of Small Island States, the European Union, Cuba, Finland, Malta and the United States of America. Replies were also received from the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations country team for Mauritius and Seychelles, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Tourism Organization, the CARICOM secretariat, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Small States Forum, the secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization.

1. Member States

69. Responses from Member States underscored the significance that the issue held for them. Questionnaires on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy were also circulated for Member States to complete.

70. Some countries saw the need for greater consultation and communication between the United Nations system and small island developing States, and suggested that there was a need to develop and implement a formal and holistic coordination mechanism. This recommendation was also echoed by the regional organizations.

71. There was also a recommendation for a comprehensive review of financial support mechanisms available to small island developing States, including the means of access, as well as a recommendation that data should be developed to show the commonalities and variations among the countries.

72. The need to strengthen those United Nations agencies with specific responsibilities with respect to small island developing States and to increase the resources available to the organizations dealing with small island developing States issues was also cited by many of the Member States responding to the questionnaire. Many also called for improvements in the collection and analysis of data to better assess the state of the sustainable development of small island developing States and their vulnerabilities and better evaluate lessons learned in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. There was also a call for the establishment of a concise standard set of common risk-related indicators, and the idea of national ownership of the development process was stressed.

73. The development of renewable energy resources in small island developing States and the establishment of systems resilient to natural disasters and external shocks were recommended, as well as the promotion of sustainable marine fisheries and greater support for the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region among the small island developing States. With respect to climate change, it was felt that bilateral and multilateral adaptation assistance to small island developing States needed to be expanded. There was also a recommendation for the implementation of national adaptation strategies and for more cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change framework.

74. The need to strengthen and upgrade the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat was reiterated by several Member States, which highlighted the importance of the ongoing work to revitalize SIDSNet and the need to develop effective ways to quantitatively profile the vulnerabilities and resilience of small island developing States. Member States also recommended improved and expanded scientific research, as well as technology development and transfer to assist the countries and the promotion of South-South cooperation.

75. Greater political commitment to the education system, including an increase in resources devoted to education, were highlighted as critical elements in an overall strategy for achieving sustainable development goals.

2. United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations

76. Recommendations from United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations providing input to the present report were complementary and often focused on very similar solutions, suggesting that there is a genuine common understanding of the challenges and that broad consensus exists on some of the strategies and actions to be employed in order to assist small island developing States in their implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Responses also supported recommendations by Member States regarding issues such as financing mechanisms, including setting up a review of the system for determining overseas development assistance; debt relief; a need for more United Nations attention to the needs of small island developing States and the establishment of a better system of focal points within the United Nations system; increased data collection and strengthened databases; resource mobilization and building of national capacity; and more emphasis on addressing the impact of climate change on small island developing States and the development of climate resilience programmes.

77. In addition to building capacity, some of the regional organizations of small island developing States saw the need to strengthen the countries' self-reliance by employing best practices for their own development.

78. There were also calls to establish and strengthen the coordinating mechanisms for small island developing States and a recommendation for enhanced national sustainable development strategies or their equivalents.

III. Strengthening collection and dissemination of data on the sustainable development of small island developing States

A. Data shortcomings and impeding factors

79. The official statistics in most small island developing States are insufficient and the available data are frequently of low quality. Shortcomings include limited coverage, insufficient compliance with the internationally accepted statistical standards, poor policy relevance, inadequate level of disaggregation and lack of timeliness. The affected areas range from macroeconomic statistics to detailed basic statistics on the structure of the economies of small island developing States, international trade, the environment, energy, social development and tourism. It should be noted that the gravity of the problem is not the same across the group, as some of the countries do significantly better than others.

80. Macroeconomic statistics continue to be a challenge. Only a minority of small island developing States are able to provide the minimum data set on national accounts, and the data is often not sufficiently current. Detailed data on international merchandise trade is not reported to the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (COMTRADE). Substantial data on environment and energy statistics is available only for a handful of small island developing States, and data gaps are numerous.

81. Most small island developing States lack functional quality assessment frameworks. Dissatisfaction with data availability and quality were expressed by Government bodies and other users. In fact, identifying useful information can be challenging. Some of the available information may be too general, superficial

and/or not adapted to the reality of small island developing States. Urgent action is required in this respect, as such data are particularly relevant for the assessment of vulnerabilities.

82. The data gaps and quality issues are the direct result of an inadequate statistical capacity. Inadequate capacity and frequent overcommitment owing to ever-growing internal and external demands for data lead to process bottlenecks and overload at national statistical offices and other parts of the national statistical system. In most small island developing States, national statistical offices do not have spare capacity to compile more statistical series or significantly improve the quality of the currently disseminated data. To add more work without making significant progress in capacity-building would surely put more strain and burden on the overworked national statistics officers and other members of national statistical systems, potentially further compromising the quality of statistics.

83. The factors hampering statistical development in small island developing States are numerous, entrenched and interrelated. They can be broadly grouped in the following categories:

(a) Lack of sustained support from higher levels of government. While the majority of Governments of small island developing States recognize the importance of evidence-based decision-making and the political commitment to improve the situation is generally expressed, improvements are often not implemented or implemented only on an ad hoc basis;

(b) Ineffective management of the national statistical system. The national statistical systems of many small island developing States suffer from poor management. Too often, activities of national statistical offices and statistical units of line ministries and other governmental agencies are not seen as integral parts of a unified national statistical system and are not managed as such;

(c) Inadequate legal framework. Many of the countries do not have statistical laws, and statistical laws are outdated in some. Statisticians do not have sufficient legal rights to access various administrative sources of data and to ensure the use of international statistical standards by other governmental bodies. The failure to put existing administrative sources to effective statistical use is one of the most significant causes of the high demand placed on populations and businesses to participate in statistical surveys;

(d) Weak statistical infrastructure. Only a small number of small island developing States have such basic elements of statistical infrastructure as business registers and harmonized systems of statistical censuses and surveys;

(e) Inadequate human resources. The lack of sufficient human resources is one of the top constraints. Practically all recent studies of the situation in small island developing States conclude that the main constraint faced by national statistics offices is the lack of qualified, skilled and competent staff;

(f) Absence of sound strategic planning. Inadequate management and weak statistical infrastructure in general are too frequently exacerbated by the lack of sound strategic planning;

(g) Lack of a modern, integrated system of data processing, database management and quality assurance. While data-processing equipment is generally available, most small island developing States do not have a modern, integrated

system for data and metadata collection, data entry, data-processing, quality control, storing, analysis and dissemination.

84. Over recent years, national statistical offices and other suppliers of national statistics, in cooperation with regional and international agencies, have undertaken efforts to improve the adequacy of the statistical data of small island developing States, which has yielded some positive results. However, there is much more work to be done to ensure that the emerging progress advances. It should be noted from the outset that the focus must be on strengthening national statistical systems, while efforts at the regional and global levels should play important, but supporting roles.

85. The shortcomings of the institutions for data collection and analysis in small island developing States could be addressed further by radically improving the functioning of the national statistical system, as a way to translate the expressed political commitment for evidence-based policy into concrete action. If it has not been done recently or properly, the appropriate bodies at the higher levels of government in small island developing States should initiate a review of the national statistical system aimed at modernization. The necessary support should be provided to national statistical offices and other relevant governmental agencies in the preparation of relevant action plans. It should be underscored that successful generation and dissemination of high quality disaggregated statistics can be achieved only if this task is seen as the collective responsibility of all members of the national statistical system, and not simply the responsibility of a statistical office alone.

86. The modernization of national statistical systems is an indispensable and integral input to the process of developing and implementing sustainable national development strategies. Ensuring close cooperation of all relevant governmental agencies has the potential to enhance data collection in the small island developing States, as does promoting a national partnership for statistics. The establishment and maintenance of strong national partnerships for statistics is essential for a better alignment of donor support and for the increased mobilization of resources at the country level for statistical development activities. All stakeholders, both governmental and private, should be consulted, for example, by setting up (or reactivating) advisory committees of users within and outside government.

87. The prioritization of data series and definition of the core set of data is another strategy that could prove successful. In view of persistent resource constraints, it is good practice to prioritize data series and define the core set of data intended for regular compilation and dissemination. A core set of statistics should be selected by application of such criteria as policy relevance, including the relevance for assessment and monitoring of vulnerability, measurability, methodological soundness and frequency of use. In the context of vulnerability assessment, the importance of data timeliness should be emphasized.

88. The samples needed for reliable survey estimates are disproportionately large in most small island developing States, especially in the smallest ones; hence more importance should be placed on administrative sources to minimize the need to collect survey data from both households and businesses.

89. Continued support at the global level is vital for the statistical development of small island developing States, as national and regional statistical systems remain weak. This support should include the following actions:

(a) Further enhancement of the role of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in coordinating statistical capacity-building, including more active engagement of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which is the highest decision-making body for international statistical activities, including for activities relevant to the countries, and the Statistics Division, which supports the Commission in the implementation of its decisions;

(b) Closer collaboration between the Statistics Division and the United Nations regional commissions and their national counterparts to build the statistical capacities of small island developing States;

(c) Strengthening of statistical activities oriented towards small island developing States of the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes;

(d) Ensuring that countries' statistical needs are better reflected in capacity-building activities of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and other global players.

B. Role of the Small Island Developing States Network in data analysis and dissemination

90. SIDSNet performs an important role in the data analysis of small island developing States. It contributes to filling the gaps in data availability by collating national data and statistical information towards assessment of vulnerability-resilience country profiles. It also focuses on strengthening research and data management by serving as a portal for national and regional statistics. One of the primary objectives of SIDSNet is to make the information provided by national and regional statisticians available and accessible to all stakeholders.

91. With the strengthening of data collection analysis and dissemination capabilities in small island developing States, national and regional information would feed into SIDSNet and allow for the small island developing States and their partners to ascertain the gaps and needs in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. The ongoing revitalization of SIDSNet, therefore, will go a long way towards enhancing strategies of implementation.

C. Analysis and dissemination of data: analytical framework for assessing vulnerability-resilience country profiles

92. The outcome document of the High-level Review Meeting on the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (General Assembly resolution 65/2) not only called for strengthening national disaggregated data and information systems, but also for strengthening analytical capabilities for decision-making, tracking progress and the development of vulnerability-resilience country profiles. It became clear during the preparatory process for the High-level Review, that there was no analytical framework with effective indicators or criteria to comprehensively assess progress in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. The key issue is not only the availability of reliable data and information; it is also the need for analytical frameworks and capacities to answer for the purpose of the data and information.

93. The Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs commissioned a study on vulnerability-resilience assessment profiling of small island developing States and to develop an analytical framework to assess the vulnerabilities of small island developing States, building on the vast wealth of work already carried out on vulnerability indices and assessment methodologies for small island developing States. While the concept of a vulnerability index is well rooted in the Barbados Programme of Action, various studies have indicated the need to look at both the vulnerability and resilience/coping capacity of countries. In addition, while there are advantages to developing a single composite index, the approach is fraught with technical complexities and there is a tendency to focus on a single number and forget the practical implications of what the number means for policy development, implementation and decision-making. An alternative and preferred approach is to develop assessment profiles for countries based on a series of criteria that cover environmental, economic and social dimensions, and that reflect both a country's vulnerabilities to exogenous and endogenous risks and threats and its resilience or coping capabilities. The latter would include policies and actions by policymakers, communities and the private sector to mitigate or manage these risks and threats.

94. The above methodology for assessing the vulnerability-resilience country profiles in small island developing States has already undergone peer review, and the next steps will focus on refinement of indicators and criteria and piloting in a few countries. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Commission, has secured funding from the European Commission to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the Mauritius Strategy that will be underpinned by this methodology and will strengthen the framework for developing data and statistics in small island developing States.

IV. Conclusion

95. The proposals put forward in the present report have sought to address different areas highlighted in the Mauritius Strategy. Though compartmentalized in this instance, the challenges are cross-cutting, as are the strategies to address them.

96. Greater access to financing would assist small island developing States in enhancing the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Scientific research and improved technological capacity will also contribute to the measures to augment implementation.

97. Increased and efficient human resources will help to build capacity in small island developing States, and the development of new initiatives can be a useful strategy. However, best practices that have been proven successful in some small island developing States could also be expanded and implemented in others.

98. Improved and expanded collection of data, as well as additional monitoring and evaluation strategies, are important initiatives that could also be applied.

99. Political commitment and international cooperation remain critical elements in the implementation of the strategies for sustainable development in small island developing States. North-South and South-South cooperation, as well as cooperation between small island developing States and partnerships among diverse stakeholders, all have merit.

100. The challenges for small island developing States, though varied and extensive, are not insurmountable. The present report has highlighted significant opportunities for a pragmatic approach that would guide the countries along the path of sustainable development. The recommendations provided in the present report are not exhaustive. Rather, as requested in General Assembly resolution 65/2, they will help to promote a results-oriented approach towards addressing the unique vulnerabilities of small island developing States and to build their resilience in the process of implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

United Nations A/66/279

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 August 2011

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Item 134 of the provisional agenda*
Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013

Strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/243. It summarizes the progress made in preparing the strategic heritage plan for the Palais des Nations in Geneva since the last report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/64/6 (Sect. 33)/Add.1). It outlines the main findings of the conceptual engineering study approved by the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, and summarizes current facility-related problems identified in the study, which have to be addressed as a matter of urgency owing to structural, health and safety concerns.

The report highlights significant efficiencies that would be achieved through the implementation of a strategic heritage plan in terms of consolidation, space management and energy conservations. It broadly describes viable options for implementing the necessary restoration and renovation works of the Palais des Nations. It also provides an analysis of project implementation options in terms of operational impact, cost implications and efficiency, and includes an estimate of the overall budget and proposed timeline.

Based on the results of the study, the Secretary-General recommends that Member States consider favourably and support the proposed implementation option for the strategic heritage plan so as to ensure the continued long-term performance and operational efficiency of the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

* A/66/150.

11-44756 (E) 230811

Please recycle

The recommended renovation and restoration implementation option, to be undertaken upon the completion of the capital master plan at Headquarters in New York, would require preparatory programme management and planning during 2012-2013. Estimates of the related resource requirements for the biennium 2012-2013 (amounting to $4.1 million) are provided in the annex to this report, should the General Assembly wish to proceed with activities in the forthcoming biennium.

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Background	3
III.	Results of the conceptual engineering and architectural study	4
IV.	Analysis of options for executing the restoration and renovation works	8
V.	Recommended implementation option	11
VI.	Next steps	12
VII.	Actions to be taken by the General Assembly	13
Annex		
	Resource requirements for the next steps in the biennium 2012-2013 (at preliminary 2012-2013 rates)	14

I. Introduction

1. Following the submission of the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/6 (Sect. 33)/Add.1), which summarized the preliminary evaluation of the current physical status of the buildings and facility-related matters at the Palais des Nations, the Secretary-General proposed, as a next step, to undertake a conceptual engineering and architectural study as the first important milestone and decision point for consideration by Member States. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended in its twelfth report[1] that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to monitor the strategic heritage plan project closely and to include in his report to the Assembly any developments, including those that might have financial implications.

2. In its resolution 64/243, the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly on the outcome of the proposed conceptual engineering study of the strategic heritage plan, including an estimate of the overall costs and timeline of the project. In the same resolution, the Assembly called upon the Secretary-General to ensure that the conceptual engineering and architectural study identified all viable alternatives in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

II. Background

3. The preliminary study, conducted in 2009 and reported on to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, provided an initial physical assessment of the buildings at the Palais des Nations, and highlighted the many and diverse maintenance challenges that have resulted from normal deterioration over the past 70 years of use. Since the date of construction, which was 70 years ago for the Palais des Nations and 40 years ago for building E, the buildings and their annexes have undergone only the minimal maintenance and repairs considered necessary for their remaining functional. The present deterioration of the Palais des Nations has already resulted in a steady increase in maintenance needs and costs for the Organization.

4. As noted in the same report, the progressively dilapidated buildings of the Palais des Nations pose an increasing risk to the safety, security and health of the United Nations delegates, staff and civil society representatives, and the more than 100,000 visitors per year.

5. Building upon the results of the preliminary study conducted in 2009, a conceptual engineering and architectural study was initiated in August 2010 and conducted over a period of six months. As part of the study, the consultant, accompanied by the United Nations Office at Geneva project team, visited Headquarters in New York to meet with senior management from the Department of Management, including the Office of Central Support Services and the Office of the Capital Master Plan, to be able to benefit first-hand from the lessons learned during the planning phases of the capital master plan and to incorporate the recommended best practices into the project planning process of the strategic heritage plan. The

[1] A/64/7/Add.11.

consultant submitted the final report on the conceptual engineering and architectural study in February 2011.

III. Results of the conceptual engineering and architectural study

6. At the outset, the United Nations Office at Geneva established the key performance objectives for the strategic heritage plan as a benchmark for the consultant to ensure that the facilities meet the Organization's functional and operational goals, provide conference services that address the current and future needs of the United Nations, and provide space for the staff and delegates at the Palais des Nations in accordance with industry best practices. Following a series of assessments and interim reports, the consultant presented the findings and recommendations that are summarized within this report.

Key performance objectives

7. The overall process is to be guided by a set of key performance objectives. Adherence to these objectives will ensure that efficient, accessible and safe conference facilities and office spaces are provided. The established key performance objectives are:

(a) To optimize the use of the available interior space and conference facilities, and provide efficient office spaces and technologically functional conference rooms;

(b) To meet all local and international regulations related to fire, structural and building safety, health and accessibility; and comply with all United Nations Headquarters Minimum Operating Security Standards guidelines;

(c) To update the building exterior and electromechanical systems so as to reduce energy consumption costs;

(d) To upgrade and expand the information and communications networks, broadcasting facilities and congress systems to meet current industry standards;

(e) To prevent irreversible deterioration or damage, and restore and maintain the capital value of the Palais des Nations and its content, specifically its historic archives;

(f) To guarantee and ensure business and operational continuity, that is, the maintenance of the day-to-day business at the Palais des Nations throughout any renovation and restoration implementation.

8. Given these objectives, the consultant reviewed the detailed findings of the preliminary study, which formed the bases of the report submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session and conducted an in-depth inspection and assessment of the condition of the buildings and their infrastructures. The consultant identified the major renovation and restoration works required and took into account the utilization of the premises and energy performance, while developing the appropriate implementation options for executing the recommended works.

9. In this context, the consultant also evaluated the operational implications should only limited renovation and restoration, based on the most urgent works related to safety and security requirements, be executed in the foreseeable future.

Major findings of the conceptual engineering and architectural study

10. The study establishes that the state of the buildings of the Palais des Nations is undermining the efforts of the United Nations Office at Geneva not only to ensure the safety and security of its users but also to deliver its mandated services. Throughout the years, energy and maintenance demands have increased steadily owing to the age of the facilities. Even if limited timely corrective actions are undertaken, they will not prevent these costs from growing exponentially.

11. Furthermore, the consultant confirmed that the deterioration of the Palais des Nations has reached a crucial point, and that, soon, the United Nations Office at Geneva may be unable to continue to offer functional facilities to its many users, unless an overall renovation is undertaken. The consultant's major findings and recommended remedial actions with respect to each of the performance objectives are set out below:

(a) **Optimize the use of the available interior space and conference facilities, and provide efficient office spaces and technologically functional conference rooms:**

Office space

(i) The study has confirmed that the utilization of the existing office space in the Palais des Nations could be improved dramatically. Comparison with current office space guidelines implemented at Headquarters suggests an underutilization of office space at Geneva in the magnitude of 25 to 30 per cent;

(ii) Through a proposed entire refurbishment of the current office space, with a complete new configuration of the floors within the main office buildings, it would be feasible to accommodate up to 700 additional staff members within the existing premises;

(iii) Geneva-based entities of the United Nations Secretariat have grown significantly over time. Owing to the shortage of office space within the Palais des Nations, suitable facilities had to be rented outside of the compound. The implementation of the strategic heritage plan would permit a consolidation of the United Nations entities in Geneva within the Palais des Nations. This would greatly enhance operational efficiencies and result in savings (in rent, utilities, security and other associated charges) of approximately $14 million per biennium;

Conference rooms

(iv) Currently, the United Nations Office at Geneva conference facility offers 34 conference rooms of various sizes and configurations and serves as one of the major conference facilities for Member States. Several conference rooms have been upgraded and refurbished over time. However, there is still an

urgent need to renovate the remaining conference rooms and to install updated communication and audio-visual technologies, to modernize support areas, to improve interpreter booths and to add workspaces;

(v) In order that current and future conference needs may be addressed, the consultant recommends space reconfiguration and consolidation. The conference rooms would be adjusted in their configuration to permit a more flexible utilization. Outdated equipment would be replaced through investing in current technology, including digital interpretation systems;

(b) **Meet all local and international regulations related to fire, structural and building safety, health and accessibility, and comply with all United Nations Minimum Operating Security Standards guidelines:**

(i) Currently, the compound does not comply with applicable local and international regulations, such as fire protection, structural seismic considerations, and other industry standard practices, nor does it comply with all the recommended Minimum Operating Security Standards blast safety guidelines, which guarantee the health and safety of the work environment. Compliance with local regulations is recommended and appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that current industry practices are met;

(ii) The Palais des Nations currently lacks a proper fire partitioning system throughout its buildings. Appropriate measures need to be taken to minimize the associated risks;

(iii) The issues of asbestos abatement and the removal of other hazardous polluting materials need to be addressed. Currently, ongoing maintenance and installation of a proper fire prevention system can take place only following asbestos abatement, requiring, in some cases, the closing of building sections, which disrupts the day-to-day business operations;

(iv) The structural surveys of the buildings have revealed corrosion problems. Significant decay in the anchors of the stone facade of one building needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency;

(v) While the United Nations Office at Geneva has installed new security systems around the compound to comply with United Nations Minimum Operating Security Standards, the blast vulnerability of the facilities still remains a safety concern. Shattered glazing from skylights could be a threat for delegates and other users, specifically in the Assembly Hall. The removal or replacement of the skylights is recommended;

(vi) Current building accessibility for persons with disabilities does not comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[2] Suitable solutions need to be implemented in accordance with General Assembly resolutions;

(c) **Update the building exterior and electromechanical infrastructure systems so as to reduce energy consumption costs:**

(i) The condition of the infrastructure within the Palais des Nations has fallen well below acceptable standards. The age of the plant machinery limits

[2] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

the systems' performance and efficiency. Over the years, there has been a significant increase in electrical power consumption within the Palais des Nations. As a result, the electrical power distribution network and the related infrastructure, specifically in office areas, have become insufficient. The age of this supply system necessitates a major overhaul. Additionally, there is only one heating and cooling distribution circuit within the buildings. It is more efficient to create distribution circuits by zone in order to achieve better environmental control levels and lower energy consumption, as well as improve the insulation of water and air distribution networks;

(ii) The study also highlights the poor to non-existent ventilation in most office areas. An overall action plan would be undertaken regarding electricity distribution, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems, including the upgrading and replacement of the current cooling systems;

(iii) The United Nations Office at Geneva works hand in hand with the host country in its efforts to implement its policies for sustainable development, decrease of energy consumption and the reduction of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions. Despite continuous efforts made by the United Nations Office at Geneva to reduce energy consumption and costs, there has been limited success owing to the lack of thermal insulation of the exterior building facades and windows, combined with the outdated technical infrastructure. The strategic heritage plan would dramatically improve the thermal insulation on facades and windows in the historic building. The upgrading of the exterior insulation of the buildings would also allow the United Nations Office at Geneva to instal a low temperature system and thus replace natural gas as the primary energy source. Water from Lake Geneva is already being used for cooling part of the buildings dating from 2009, and could be further utilized for heating;

(iv) The implementation of the strategic heritage plan is expected to result in a reduction in energy consumption at the Palais des Nations of approximately 25 per cent, which would translate into savings of $1.7 million per biennium;

(d) **Upgrade and expand the information and communications networks, broadcasting facilities and congress systems to meet current industry standards:**

(i) Owing to the advances in the information technology, communications and audio-visual field, there is an urgent need to replace the cabling and obsolete broadcasting facilities and conference systems. Under the strategic heritage plan, it is proposed that current technology in all of the conference rooms be installed, that local distribution equipment and outlets be replaced in order to enlarge capacity and that the capacity of the telephony system be renewed and expanded;

(ii) Works relating to information technology systems include updating and installing Wi-Fi services in conference rooms. It is necessary to upgrade videoconference systems and to improve the optical fibre network throughout the campus so as to guarantee the recording and distribution of video and audio signals in every conference room. Upgrading of the existing data cabling, installation of public address systems and integration of all new services are also required;

(c) **Prevent irreversible deterioration or damage, and restore and maintain the capital value of the Palais des Nations and its content, specifically its historic archives:**

(i) The Palais des Nations is a historic building dating back to the era of the League of Nations. It is an important piece of historic architecture and houses important pieces of artwork as well as the archives of the League of Nations. The study suggests that actions be taken to prevent further deterioration of, and irreversible damage to, the buildings and its contents;

(ii) The League of Nations archives are listed in the Memory of the World Register of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The extensive archival documents in their current location are at risk of destruction and/or deterioration from the threat of fire, humidity, flooding and lack of temperature control;

(iii) Under the strategic heritage plan, all possible archival options, including the use of new technology and appropriate storage space, will be assessed, and a long-term solution for the preservation of the irreplaceable collection of historic documents would be implemented in line with the preservation requirements for archival material;

(f) **Guarantee and ensure business and operational continuity, that is, the maintenance of the day-to-day business at the Palais des Nations throughout any renovation and restoration implementation:**

(i) The day-to-day operational functions of the Palais des Nations, with respect to ensuring satisfactory current and up-to-date future conference services, are fully considered and analysed within the context of the implementation options and recommendations of the consultant.

IV. Analysis of options for executing the restoration and renovation works

12. The consultant reviewed a number of ways of executing the identified building restoration and renovation works. Three distinctly different project implementation options were identified, namely, a fast-track (approximately 5-year) implementation, a phased implementation over a medium-term (approximately 8-year) period, and a phased implementation a long-term (approximately 13-year) period.

13. The implementation options differ mainly in terms of the required extent and location of the swing space. The fast-track implementation option would require most, if not all, of the swing space and the relocation of operations out of the compound. The main objective of the medium-term and long-term planned approaches would be to allow all activities at the United Nations Office at Geneva to remain operational within the premises of the Palais des Nations while renovation and restoration works are being implemented. The medium-term phased implementation option requires swing space for approximately one third of the operations at the United Nations Office at Geneva which could be located within the compound. The long-term phased implementation option reduces the need for swing space, in rented space outside the compound, to a minimum.

14. The impact of these three planned implementation options and their associated costs are described further below. All costs, which were originally developed in Swiss francs (CHF) and have been converted using a current operational exchange rate of 1 United States dollar (US$) = 1.046 CHF, would need to be recalculated based on the updated exchange rate at the time the project is executed.

(a) **Fast-track implementation option (approximately five years):**

(i) Under the fast-track implementation option, the actions would be undertaken in the shortest time possible with works undertaken concurrently. This option would require relocating all of the activities of the United Nations Office at Geneva into rental space outside the compound. Finding suitable temporary rental space for offices and conferences will be highly problematic within the context of the existing and foreseeable real estate market in Geneva. The required exterior swing space would add significant costs to this option, which would not be offset by a reduction in construction costs;

(ii) Under this approach, the overall estimated costs of the project for design, programme and project management, and construction and additional costs for other related items such as swing space, relocation and rental, together with contingencies, were estimated to be in the range of approximately CHF 684 million (equivalent to US$ 654 million);

(b) **Medium-term implementation option (approximately eight years):**

(i) The medium-term option would balance the advantages and savings of executing a majority of the construction works in logical groupings, and the limited swing space required to accommodate an estimated 1,000 staff members. The required temporary facilities to be constructed could be accommodated within the compound. Consequently, the buildings under construction could be isolated when work is undertaken, which would reduce the risks of exposure of staff to construction-related activities and minimize inconveniences such as construction noise and exposure to hazardous materials, among others;

(ii) Under this approach, the overall estimated costs of the project for design, programme and project management, and construction and additional costs for other related items such as swing space, relocation and rental, together with contingencies, were estimated in the range of approximately CHF 618 million (equivalent to US$ 591 million);

(c) **Long-term implementation option (approximately 13 years):**

(i) A third alternative for implementation of the strategic heritage plan would be to refurbish the buildings segment by segment and, in some areas, floor by floor. The main benefit of this option would be to eliminate the need for construction of a swing-space structure on the compound; however, this one-time savings would ultimately be outweighed by the increased costs for construction over an additional five years, increased internal relocation costs, and those for the rental of a limited number of offices and conference facilities;

(ii) Choosing this option could result in disruption to the work of staff and delegates, conferences and occupants in adjacent building areas, which might remain a factor for a significant period of time as construction activities were

prolonged. This option would also require a greater portion of the work to be implemented during non-working hours, significantly increasing the construction costs;

(iii) Under this approach, the overall estimated costs of the project for design, programme and project management, and construction and additional costs for other related items such as swing space, relocation and rental, together with contingencies, were estimated in the range of approximately CHF 651 million (equivalent to US$ 622 million).

15. The consultant also analysed the impacts of maintaining, in contrast with the above planned implementation options, the current approach to building upkeep and maintenance of the Palais des Nations. Under this approach, only immediate urgent works needed to address critical health, safety and security requirements would be carried out as and when they arose. Necessary stopgap works would be implemented during non-working hours, which would greatly increase both the duration of the projects and their cost.

16. Continued implementation of the current approach would result in:

(a) Increased frequency and cost of urgent works due to the buildings' progressive deterioration;

(b) Increased rental costs over time, due to inefficient space utilization and organizational expansion;

(c) Progressively increasing energy costs due to outdated and inefficient systems, and poor insulation in the buildings;

(d) Nominal compliance with local and international regulations and guidelines related to health, safety, security and accessibility for persons with disabilities, as these issues would be addressed only when urgent works were implemented;

(e) Reduction of the capital asset value of the buildings due to limited maintenance;

(f) A larger and more costly building restoration and renovation after several decades (similar to the capital master plan at United Nations Headquarters in New York), due to limited maintenance and cost escalations.

17. A comparative analysis of the projected financial implications of the different options revealed that the total costs to the Organization of continuing the current reactive building maintenance approach would far exceed those for any of the planned options outlined in paragraph 14 above.

18. During this study, construction costs, additional allowances for, inter alia, swing space and related moves, and contingencies for unforeseen urgent works, were compared, taking into account future cost escalation and inflation rates. In addition to consideration of the direct project costs, there have been assumptions made based on a 25-year period for maintenance, energy and required rental costs, providing an equal comparison of the approaches and implementation options.

19. It was estimated that the costs for continuing the current reactive maintenance approach would result in expenditures of approximately $1.4 billion over the next 25 years, while the total amount for the planned works, either the medium-term

implementation option (approximately 8 years) or the long-term implementation option (approximately 13 years), over the same period of 25 years would be in the range of $1.2 billion-$1.3 billion. Therefore, the overall projected savings to the Organization in implementing the proposed planned options would be in the range of $100 million-$200 million.

20. Besides the lower capital costs of a planned renovation vis-à-vis the reactive option, there would also be significant near-term cost benefits secured from the efficiencies gained through consolidation of external rentals into space accommodation at the Palais des Nations.

V. Recommended implementation option

21. **Based on the consultant's findings, the medium-term multiphased renovation over a period of approximately eight years is the recommended way to proceed, as it would result in the lowest cost, would be the least disruptive renovation option and would meet all the key performance objectives and operational goals of the Organization in Geneva.**

22. The need for swing space under this approach is reduced and can be accommodated within the compound, thus limiting disturbance to all the operations, as staff will remain in the compound. Pursuing this option would allow the Organization to organize and describe the means by which the required restoration and renovation maintenance programme works would be implemented, and would result in the following major advantages and benefits:

(a) Consolidation of United Nations Secretariat presence in Geneva through increased office accommodation capacity within the Palais des Nations by some 25-30 per cent, resulting in projected savings of $14 million per biennium;

(b) Full compliance with all health, safety and security regulations and industry best practice standards, including asbestos abatement and removal of hazardous materials;

(c) Provision of modern, flexible conference rooms with up-to-date industry standard technologies and efficient office and workspaces which would successfully respond to requirements of Member States in terms of effective meeting facilities;

(d) Repair of all structural problems and replacement of the current skylight structures and exterior glazing so as to address pressing safety concerns;

(e) Reduced utility costs and carbon footprint due to improved energy efficiency, with the installation of thermal insulation, the upgrade of building systems and the replacement of the existing glazing in recommended buildings, which would result in a savings of approximately $1.7 million per biennium;

(f) Implementation of construction works in an organized and consolidated manner, which would satisfy urgent requirements and long-term needs, while taking advantage of economies of scale in construction activities;

(g) Completion of most works during regular working hours, thereby reducing project duration and need for overtime;

(h) Addressing of the requirements for accessibility of the Palais des Nations.

23. The table below outlines the overall schedule for the recommended medium-term phased implementation option.

Proposed project schedules, 2012-2021

	Timeline: medium-term approach									
Activities	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*	*2021*
Pre-planning phase										
Programme management statement of work										
Programme management solicitation										
Project implementation plan		◇								
Multi-annual investment plan		◇								
Design phase										
Construction phase										

VI. Next steps

24. Subject to endorsement by the General Assembly of the proposed implementation option for the strategic heritage plan, the next steps would entail maintaining limited project progression by using existing internal resources to develop terms of reference for establishing a dedicated project team and senior-level advisory committee comprising the substantive offices that would be affected by the project.

25. The current Buildings and Engineering Section of Central Support Services at the United Nations Office at Geneva will continue to be dedicated to the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the existing facilities so as to ensure ongoing business continuity, and the health and safety of the Organization at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Section is not in a position to manage this extensive project without additional dedicated staff. Securing the appropriate level of dedicated technical staff capacity from the beginning would be vital for the successful implementation of the project. The Board of Auditors, in the context of the preparatory work of the strategic heritage plan and implementation of security strengthening projects, expressed its concerns regarding the "small number of (technical) staff" in Central Support Services available for management of projects of this order of magnitude (see A/65/5 (Vol. I), paras. 346-347).

26. Subject to the approval of the General Assembly, a dedicated project management team could begin work in 2012 to supplement the existing Buildings and Engineering Section staff capacity. This team could initially prepare the documentation necessary to secure a programme management firm, consisting of specialized professionals not available within the Section, by the end of 2012. It is envisioned that during 2013, the programme management firm could develop an overall detailed project implementation and phasing plan inclusive of all financial implications.

27. Should the proposed next steps described in this report be endorsed by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General could then provide a progress report during the sixty-seventh session of the Assembly regarding the proposed ensuing

steps that would be necessary to advance the renovation and restoration of the Palais des Nations. It is envisioned that the construction aspects of the project could begin following the completion of the capital master plan in accordance with the mandate of the Assembly set out in its resolution 64/243.

28. The Secretary-General is pleased to advise that the Swiss Federal Council decided in June 2011 that Switzerland, as host country, will participate in the renovation of the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva through a voluntary contribution of up to a maximum of 50 million Swiss francs. Subject to approval by the Swiss Federal Chambers, this single contribution, to be paid in 2012, is intended for the implementation of necessary structural measures for energy saving to be undertaken in the context of the comprehensive renovation of the Palais des Nations. As such, the contribution will result in a corresponding deduction of the total cost of the renovation works to be carried out in the context of the strategic heritage plan.

VII. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

29. **The General Assembly may wish to:**

(a) **Take note of the findings and recommendations contained in the present report;**

(b) **Endorse, in principle, the recommended implementation option, without prejudice to a final decision by the General Assembly on the strategic heritage plan;**

(c) **Approve the next steps outlined in paragraphs 24-27 above at a total estimated cost of $4,069,700 (at preliminary 2012-2013 rates) in the biennium 2012-2013, as further detailed in the annex to this report.**

Annex

Resource requirements for the next steps in the biennium 2012-2013 (at preliminary 2012-2013 rates)

Section 29E, Administration, Geneva

General temporary assistance ($1,164,600)

1. Resource requirement of $1,164,600 would cover an initial dedicated project management team at the United Nations Office at Geneva, comprising one P-4 Architect, one P-4 Engineer and one P-3 technical expert, during the biennium 2012-2013. This team would be hired through temporary vacancy announcements and would review the consultancy findings, validate the recommended implementation, prepare the statements of works and develop the documentation for the solicitation process for securing a programme management firm. The project management team would develop overall project management guidelines and establish communication strategies with the substantive offices that would be most directly affected by the strategic heritage plan; and would collaborate with the programme management firm on the detailed phasing, planning and budgeting process, as described below.

Section 34, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance

Contractual services ($2,800,000)

2. Contractual resource requirements of $2,800,000 for the biennium 2012-2013 would cover the initial services of a programme management firm in developing the overall project implementation phasing plan, the multi-annual capital investment plan inclusive of financial analyses, and a detailed project schedule with key milestones. The firm would work closely with the United Nations Office at Geneva project management team on determining the necessary expertise and consultants required for the success of the project during all the phases of its implementation; and develop an overall consultant project management structure, similar to the management structure of the capital master plan, with a robust reporting system. At the conclusion of these tasks, the firm would provide a detailed report on the means of, and detailed requirements for, implementing the renovation and restoration works at the Palais des Nations.

Resource requirements (at preliminary 2012-2013 rates)

(United States dollars)

Section/object of expenditure	*2012-2013 estimate*
29E, Administration, Geneva	
General temporary assistance	1 164 600
34, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance	
Contractual services (programme management firm)[a]	2 800 000
Net requirements	**3 964 600**

Section/object of expenditure	*2012-2013 estimate*
37, Staff assessment	
Staff assessment[b]	105 100
Total	**4 069 700**

[a] Calculated in Swiss francs (CHF) and converted based on a rate of 1 US$ = 1.046 CHF.

[b] To be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

United Nations A/66/280

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 August 2011

Original: English

Sixty-sixth session
Item 15 of the provisional agenda*
Culture of Peace

Intercultural, interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the activities carried out by the main United Nations entities in the field of dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. The report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/138, covers a range of topics, including the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, the fourth Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, communication, awareness-raising and educational activities, to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as well as a rights-based approach to the issue. It also provides the outcome of the consultations carried out on the possibility of proclaiming a United Nations decade on interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

* A/66/150.

11-44771 (E) 300811

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Lessons learned from the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and future steps by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	3
III.	Consolidation of the Alliance of Civilizations and preparation of its fourth forum	7
IV.	Activities of the United Nations system to promote intercultural dialogue	8
V.	Promoting interreligious dialogue through cooperation with faith-based organizations	12
VI.	A rights-based approach to dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions	16
VII.	Outcome of the consultations on the proposal for a decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue	18
VIII.	Conclusion	20

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/138, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace". It sets out the main activities carried out by the United Nations system in support of dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions since the adoption of the resolution. The report also provides information on the outcome of the consultations carried out by the Secretariat, in coordination with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), on the possibility of proclaiming a United Nations decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, pursuant to the same resolution.

2. Since the adoption of the resolution, a number of initiatives have been carried out by the United Nations system, Member States and civil society organizations. UNESCO continues to be the main institution dealing with all culture-related issues on a large scale within the United Nation system. The United Nation Alliance of Civilizations also organizes high-profile events on the issues. The contributions of United Nations entities are therefore of particular relevance to the present report and are highlighted herein.

3. The report also comprises contributions from the work of other United Nations entities, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information. The contributions are set out in the report according to the main focus of the activities carried out.

II. Lessons learned from the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and future steps by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

4. The General Assembly designated UNESCO to be the lead agency of the United Nations system for the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, capitalizing on its invaluable experience of more than 60 years in advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples. The lessons learned by UNESCO from the International Year are set out below.

5. Coinciding with the conclusion the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures provided a unique opportunity for the United Nations system to reaffirm its fundamental commitment to the plurality of humanity, in which cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are mutually reinforcing and whose implications drive their relevant programmes. The International Year thus served as a firm foundation to give fresh impetus to the theme of dialogue among cultures.

6. The main objective of the International Year was to help to dissipate any confusion stemming from ignorance, prejudice and exclusion that creates tension,

insecurity, violence or conflict. The task was to demonstrate the benefits of cultural diversity by acknowledging the importance of the exchanges between cultures and the ties forged between them since the dawn of humanity. The ultimate aim was to integrate the principles of dialogue into policies at all levels in order to foster an environment conducive to the rapprochement of cultures.

7. The process was facilitated by a number of initiatives aimed at achieving the same objective as those of the preceding decade. Beyond their principal value as part of a given year, all initiatives paved the way by familiarizing many decision makers and citizens with the implications of the rapprochement of cultures. The parallel celebrations of other international years and World Days enabled a considerable deepening and convergence of the themes and questions addressed.

8. The action plan for the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures included four main themes, chosen to facilitate ownership of the Year by Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations: (a) promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity; (b) building a framework for commonly shared values; (c) strengthening quality education and the building of intercultural competences; and (d) fostering dialogue for sustainable development. The themes were based on the cardinal principle of the equal dignity of all cultures, mutual respect and the strengthening of international cooperation for lasting peace.

9. The specific activities considered by Member States and various partners, including the Alliance of Civilizations and civil society stakeholders, are available from http://www.unesco.org/culture/dialogue/2010iyrc/home. The activities focused on the following:

(a) Providing greater opportunities for research, meetings, public debates, exhibitions, fairs and festivals and making use of new technologies that specifically foster linguistic diversity and translation;

(b) Promoting the role of creativity, which is a fundamental attribute of innovation, by stressing the individualities and similarities of societies and, in that regard, enhancing the promotion of an integrated vision of all aspects of cultural heritage as a bearer of history and identity that must be preserved, a resource and engine of sustainable development and a tool for intercultural dialogue, which includes interreligious dialogue;

(c) Improving access to formal and non-formal education, with an emphasis on quality education for all, human rights education, cultural diversity, gender equality and the integration of marginalized groups, and the strengthening of South-South and North-South inter-university cooperation, particularly by creating sites of excellence and innovation;

(d) The contributions of the media and of new information and communications technology to changing the perceptions of different cultures and religions through, inter alia, the promotion of dialogue on the Internet where numerous cultural and linguistic expressions can be circulated and shared; or the co-production of dialogues between media professionals from different cultures, particularly on sensitive issues;

(e) Recognizing and respecting knowledge, including traditional knowledge systems and the knowledge of indigenous peoples, which contribute to sustainable

development, the promotion of human rights, philosophy and intercultural dialogue, with particular emphasis on fighting racism and discrimination and on the culture of peace and democracy.

10. It is in that spirit that the numerous suggestions, initiatives and formulations of possible partnerships (almost 1,000 projects in all) succeeded in achieving the global key objectives of the Year. A large number of projects were launched and tens of thousands of people worldwide participated in the exercise. The International Year was instrumental in building awareness among a wide, diverse and particularly young audience of the virtuous cycle of cultural diversity and its corollary, intercultural dialogue, as part of processes of rapprochement. It is hoped that the Year demonstrably helped to change attitudes, mindsets, behaviours and habits.

11. A particular conclusion to emerge from the activities was that, in the new, rapidly changing international landscape, it is necessary to focus increasingly on the close links between cultural diversity, dialogue, development, security and peace. Those five interdependent notions should be reconsidered in order to develop new approaches, namely, that culture be based on its rich diversity and that dialogue focus on the potential of material and symbolic diversity to achieve sustained peace, in view of the complexity of combining diversity, uniqueness and universality in a globalized world. Dialogue can only be effective if basic prerequisites are met, namely equality, justice, poverty reduction and respect for human rights.

12. Two persistent issues have arisen: (a) in the context of globalization, determining the new arguments in favour of a strong commitment by States and civil society to creating development and mutual understanding on the basis of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and (b) determining the new choices and strategies needed in terms of public policies? In answering those questions, the three challenges that must be tackled as a priority are detailed below.

13. In-depth structural reforms must be supported in order to show, through local and international experiences, that no culture is monolithic, but is instead made up of exchanges and interactions, and that each culture offers a fertile ground for renewed creation. Prior understanding of the diversity inherent in one's own culture is crucial to better understanding cultural diversity worldwide. However, in the more specific case of interreligious dialogue, which is a component of the wider intercultural dialogue, religious and non-religious beliefs and convictions must be better known and understood in order to avoid ignorance and harmful simplistic views.

14. Support must be provided for practical measures that mobilize not only States but also civil society, including a demarcation of the roles of States and local governments. That entails building capacities, opportunities and frameworks for cooperation among various players in order to reach not only those who are already committed to dialogue but, above all, those who do not yet feel concerned. The responsibility for engaging in dialogue is shared by such stakeholders as intellectuals, artists and opinion-makers (including media professionals and religious and youth leaders), who have a major role to play. The urgent need for linkages among the global, regional and local levels to promote such vital but fragile dialogue must be stressed.

15. The added value of dialogue among and within societies is only valid on the basis of the experiences and memories of individuals and social groups. It must be

taken into consideration that dialogue involves individuals' cognitive skills, imagination, sensibilities and emotions. That is particularly true in the new digital landscape, where the social media brings people face to face with cultural and religious practices that they cannot interpret. The role of formal and non-formal education thus becomes crucial since it not only transmits knowledge but also offers critical and objective perspectives on all transmitted content.

16. In the shifting international context, UNESCO continues to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue in accordance with its original mandate and with one of the overarching objectives of the organization's medium-term strategy for 2008-2013, related to foster cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace. Against that backdrop, UNESCO is currently developing a new intersectional and interdisciplinary programme of action for a culture of peace and non-violence, which is expected to be adopted by the organization at the thirty-sixth session of its General Conference (to be held in October and November 2011. The main objectives of the programme are as follows:

(a) To improve the global understanding and deconstruct preconceived ideas, by developing a global consciousness on thinking and learning for the twenty-first century, taking into account the emergence of a global civic space with young men and women as relevant actors;

(b) To develop a concept- and programme-based approach that uses suitable and convincing language to present new arguments in favour of a strong commitment by States and civil society to nurture "everyday peace" in a social environment that encourages civic engagement and dialogue within and among cultures and communities, while improving the understanding of the root causes of violence;

(c) To develop a common global curriculum on humanism and intercultural competencies that promote the "cardinal virtues" of temperance, courage, wisdom and justice, as well as empathy, hospitality, the harmonious coexistence and appreciation of diversity and respect for the equal rights of men and women, in order to spur critical and creative thinking among young people through formal and non-formal education, as well as through information and communications technology and the social media;

(d) To raise awareness about violence and the importance of investing in the civic engagement of young people in order to build participative societies; the development of critical thinking; the eradication of violence against women; the strengthening of democratic culture and fundamental freedoms; and measures to combat all forms of discrimination and xenophobia.

17. UNESCO is also preparing to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, on 2 November 2011, during the above-mentioned session of the General Conference, and on the occasion of the fourth annual forum of the Alliance of Civilizations. Special attention will be paid to the aspirations of the Declaration, including the promotion of the fruitful diversity of cultures, the free flow of ideas by word and image, the right to individual expression and creativity, the strengthening of international solidarity through innovative partnerships and the increased involvement of civil society to achieve harmonious coexistence within and among the contemporary plural societies.

III. Consolidation of the Alliance of Civilizations and preparation of its fourth forum

18. Under the leadership of United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Jorge Sampaio, the Alliance has now become one of the premier platforms for intercultural and interreligious dialogue within and between diverse societies. Established under the co-sponsorship of Spain and Turkey, the Alliance includes a Group of Friends, whose 128 members include Governments, international organizations, cities, non-governmental organizations, academics, religious figures, corporations, the media and individuals, prominently young people.

19. The Alliance continued to call on its members to develop good governance of cultural diversity through national plans, of which 26 are in existence and more are in preparation, on such themes as education, youth, media and migration. Promising practices were exchanged. Following its experience in South-Eastern Europe, the Alliance adopted a regional strategy on intercultural dialogue and cooperation for the Mediterranean in Malta in November 2010, and the elements of an action plan were put together in consultation with civil society. Work on a regional strategy for Latin America is continuing and will be finalized in 2011.

20. The Alliance prepared for its next annual forum, to be held in Doha from 11 to 13 December. The forum will be a turning point in terms of raising visibility, integrating the global agenda and reinforcing commitments for action. Reflecting the suggestion made by Sheikha Mozah, emphasis will be placed on creating synergies between the objectives of the Alliance and the advancement of the Millennium Development Goals. An initial large-scale exchange with civil society organizations was held in Doha on May 3 and 4.

21. The Alliance also acted as a platform for flexible cooperation, to implement the projects agreed under the second implementation plan and respond to developments affecting intercultural dialogue. The developments include the new context in the Middle East and North Africa region; the ongoing debates in Europe about reconciling diversity and cohesion; and the influence of religion on peace and development. Tensions in the mutual perceptions of the relationship between Islam and the West remained an important topic. The following points should also be mentioned:

(a) In collaboration with Jordan, the Alliance promoted Global Interfaith Harmony Week. It also continued to contribute to the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures;

(b) On World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, the Alliance, with UNESCO and several technology firms, launched the online campaign "Do ONE Thing for Diversity and Inclusion" to invite people worldwide to support cultural diversity and cohesion, in a new form of outreach to large numbers. The Alliance actively promotes the key messages from youth organizations celebrating the International Year of Youth, including peace, human rights and solidarity across generations, cultures, religions and civilizations;

(c) In partnership with BMW, the Alliance launched the World Intercultural Facility for Innovation to support innovative grass-roots projects that enhance cultural understanding. The Youth Solidarity Fund of the Alliance supported

20 grass-roots projects led by youth organizations to advance the objectives of the Alliance, including in conflict and post-conflict areas in Africa and Europe. Having been successfully piloted in 2010, the fellowship programme of the Alliance is exposing a new group of emerging leaders from the Arab world to the diverse realities of Western societies and vice-versa. In April 2011, the Global Youth Movement of the Alliance was launched in Baku to connect youth organizations and leverage their commitment to the objectives of the Alliance. Promising experiences of the Alliance online community "Integration: Building Inclusive Societies" are identified and debated on its website, which benefited from the outreach initiatives of partners in Bogota, London, Rome and Melbourne, Australia. In partnership with the International Organization for Migration, the "Plural+" project continued to attract video entries from around the world on young people's views of diversity;

(d) Attention to narratives, perceptions and the role of the media remained very high. The Global Experts project, which had been created connects journalists with experts throughout the world to provide nuanced analyses, was enhanced. Training courses, notably in the Middle East and South Asia, were provided to journalists and opinion leaders who report on and write about issues relevant to intercultural understanding. The Alliance also organized debates in New York on the Middle East peace process and in Cairo on the political changes in countries in the Middle East and North Africa. A series on religion and the public space was launched in 10 newspapers around the world;

(e) An Alliance summer school, first held in August 2010, brought together hundreds of young people from around the world to acquire knowledge and hone their skills on communicating across cultures. The school is growing and diversifying in 2011. The network of dialogue cafés continued to expand, enabling groups of people around the world to communicate face to face. Impending openings include Ramallah, Tel Aviv, Cairo and Tunis. The Alliance co-sponsored a conference on cross-cultural education, held in Lebanon.

22. After consultation with the Group of Friends, the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations will present the Third Implementation Plan (2012-13) of the Alliance to the Secretary-General in the third quarter of 2011. He is also taking steps to secure more stable and predictable resources for the Alliance, through the organization of a replenishment conference, to be held in Turkey in October 2011.

IV. Activities of the United Nations system to promote intercultural dialogue

23. In addition to its involvement in the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and with the Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations system has continued to undertake a wide range of activities to promote dialogue among cultures. A number of key activities carried out by major United Nations actors in that field are set out below.

Activities led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

24. UNESCO continued its activities related to history, memory and dialogue through the wide dissemination and pedagogical use of its works on general and regional histories, to promote a new and pluralistic approach to the histories of peoples and regions. The collections help to deconstruct prejudices and facilitate mutual understanding. The organization also launched a project for the pedagogical use of the general history of Africa, consistent with its aim to make history teaching instrumental in shaping the identities of peoples in and their understanding of the common ties that lie beneath the cultural diversity of any region, particularly with regard to the African diaspora. The Slave Route project helped to break the silence on slavery and shed light on the global transformations and cultural interactions it generated. In that respect, UNESCO continues to raise global awareness by conducting rigorous scientific research in order to reveal the countless influences generated by forced dialogue between people, cultures and civilizations throughout the world.

25. UNESCO contributed to the celebration of International Day of Nowruz on 21 March (resolution 64/253). Included in 2009 in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, Nowruz stands out as a particularly vibrant component of such heritage and instils a sense of identity and continuity in those who celebrate it.

26. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/249, in which 21 May was proclaimed World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, UNESCO launched the annual International Festival of Cultural Diversity to highlight the multifaceted and irreplaceable diversity that unites all peoples of the world. The Festival is celebrated at UNESCO headquarters and field offices through an array of cultural events. A wide range of activities are also carried out by local actors. The campaign "Do ONE Thing for Diversity and Inclusion", in partnership with the Alliance, also helps to promote the Day.

27. Within the framework of its cooperation with the Alliance, UNESCO has also developed the intersectoral programme "Intercultural Vademecum" composed of five projects, two of which were launched during World Philosophy Day, celebrated in 2010 on 18 November. The themes of the two projects are "A scientific, philosophical, literary and artistic anthology of Muslim/Arab civilization and its contribution to the revival of Western thought and European Renaissance" and "Arab-Muslim Civilization in the Mirror of the Universal". Both projects are intended to serve as tools for education and media purposes, to present an intercultural vision of history that unites the Muslim/Arab world and the West.

Activities to promote the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

28. In its resolution 64/134, the General Assembly proclaimed the year commencing on 12 August 2010 the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, in order to promote dialogue and understanding across generations, cultures, religions and civilizations, and the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and solidarity.

29. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, the global mechanism of cooperation on matters related to youth development within the United Nations system, developed a framework approach for the International Year. One of the strategic objectives of the framework was to connect and build bridges to increase intercultural understanding among youth. In that context, the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and its focal point on youth organized a wide range of side events and briefing sessions aimed at raising the profile of the issues. For example, in July 2010, the monthly consultations held at United Nations Headquarters examined the ways in which young people could promote dialogue and mutual understanding. A partnership with civil society also led to development of the "Activities kit: a guide to celebrating the International Year of Youth", including practical guidance and concrete examples of activities throughout the International Year and beyond. The preparatory youth event of the Alliance of Civilizations forum held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2010 is another example of that commitment.

30. United Nations agencies have used the International Year as an opportunity to undertake activities aimed at young people. For example, FAO conducted workshops for children and young people on biodiversity and training courses on the Millennium Development Goals in relation to Alliance activities for youth. It also developed the World Youth Award, a self-development programme for young people that addresses issues related to the Goals and to international citizenship. The award is scheduled to be launched in August 2011 at the World Scout Jamboree in Sweden.

31. The Department of Information produced communication materials for the Year, with the slogan "Our Year, Our Voice". Through proactive outreach initiatives, the Department's network of United Nations information centres mobilized local youth to promote the Year through a variety of activities, including sports, video competitions and poster exhibitions.

Activities related to recognition of indigenous cultures

32. The secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues undertakes activities to promote intercultural dialogue relating to indigenous issues and rights. As part of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, observed on 9 August, a special event was organized in honour of indigenous film-makers for their exceptional work in raising sensitivity and awareness about the culture, history and everyday life of indigenous peoples around the world.

33. In order to address the capacity-building needs of Governments, agencies and indigenous peoples at all levels, the secretariat of the Permanent Forum has organized training courses on indigenous issues in a number of countries, including Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Ecuador, Guyana, Nepal and the Philippines. A resource kit on indigenous issues was created to focus on development and indigenous peoples, with an emphasis on cultural diversity, identity and rights. The kit is designed to guide United Nations country teams on ways to engage indigenous peoples and include their perspectives in development processes, including in preparing common country assessments, United Nations development assistance frameworks, poverty reduction strategy papers and reports on the Goals.

34. Other United Nations system entities have increased their work related to indigenous issues. For example, in 2010, FAO adopted a corporate policy on indigenous and tribal peoples and developed a programme on globally important agricultural heritage systems, which aims to reinforce the underlying ecological and sociocultural processes that have sustained valuable traditional agricultural systems from around the world and to empower and conserve smallholder communities, many of which are indigenous. FAO also documents indigenous food systems around the world and formulates health interventions based on reviving local social and cultural systems.

35. Similarly, IFAD promotes systematic intercultural dialogue with representatives of national and local indigenous peoples' organizations and, in 2011, established an indigenous peoples' forum, which will be held in Rome every other year, in conjunction with the IFAD Governing Council.

36. In the context of its activities to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, UNICEF took initiatives on such themes as bilingual and intercultural education, culturally sensitive health services, birth registration and ending violence, abuse and exploitation. The UNICEF regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean has a particularly long-standing engagement in activities aimed at generating strategic information, empowering indigenous peoples, mainly women and adolescents, and building local capacities.

Communication activities by Department of Public Information

37. Communication and outreach are key aspects of the work of the United Nations on intercultural dialogue. Through UN Radio, UN Television, the *United Nations Chronicle*, the United Nations News Centre and the Organization's website, the Department of Public Information covers a wide range of events organized to strengthen the Organization's voice on intercultural dialogue, in particular during the international days and global weeks proclaimed by the General Assembly. Web pages have been created in the six official languages of the United Nations for many of the events.

38. The 2011 theme of the Department's annual media seminar on peace in the Middle East, held in Budapest on 12 and 13 July 2011, was "Prospects for peace: understanding current changes and overcoming obstacles". Participants in the seminar reviewed the current status of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and examined the role played by the creative community, including writers, musicians and film-makers, in fostering conditions for dialogue and better understanding between Israelis and Palestinians.

39. Reconciliation and education was the focus of the 2011 commemoration of the Rwanda genocide, which was observed with a series of events organized during the week of 4 April 2011 at United Nations Headquarters and at United Nations information centres around the world. In addition to a memorial ceremony and a student conference, an exhibition entitled "Lessons from Rwanda" was displayed in Kigali, Bujumbura, Geneva and Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania.

40. The Department of Public Information continues to engage civil society on related issues, through special briefings for non-governmental organizations and students, including on such themes as: "Promoting diversity of world cultures and

the links that unite them", held in October 2010 in observance of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures; "Focus on faith series: unveiling Judaism and its place in the dialogue among civilizations", held in November 2010; and "Speak up, stop discrimination: exploring human rights in the relationship between the Muslim world and the West", held in observance of Human Rights Day.

41. On 5 May 2011, the Department organized a symposium on the theme "Can literature effect change?", with a panel of eminent Indian authors and poets. The United Nations News Centre also published a feature based on an interview with writer and United Nations Messenger of Peace Paulo Coelho on the theme of intercultural dialogue.

Activities carried out by the Department of Political Affairs

42. During the reporting period, the efforts of the Department of Political Affairs on preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding, continued to catalyse and support dialogue across societal cleavages, in order to reduce, manage and resolve violent conflict. The Department pursued such efforts where it had been explicitly mandated by the Security Council to promote and support an environment of dialogue, for example, in Burundi in the run-up to the mid-2010 electoral cycle, or in cases of crisis mediation, for example, in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, where both the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Department's Mediation Support Unit played important roles.

43. The Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme have continued their successful partnership to promote longer-term dialogue within the Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, which focuses on early engagement in order to build national infrastructures of peace as well as attitudes, aptitudes and platforms for dialogue across societal cleavages before violent conflict emerges or re-emerges. The Programme has provided support to build local or national dialogue mechanisms to such countries as Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Lesotho, Kenya, Maldives, Mauritania and Togo. The Mediation Support Unit has provided additional expertise to the dialogue processes in a number of those countries.

V. Promoting interreligious dialogue through cooperation with faith-based organizations

44. The United Nations system also contributes to promoting interreligious dialogue by engaging with faith-based organizations and involving them in its policy and advocacy activities. Such initiatives bring together peoples of different faiths to discuss common issues and United Nations development objectives.

United Nations Population Fund

45. UNFPA strengthens advocacy, knowledge management and capacity-building with faith-based organizations and members of its Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development. The Fund continues to chair the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Organizations for the

Millennium Development Goals. Under the aegis of that partnership, UNFPA and the United Nations System Staff College will co-facilitate a strategic learning exchange for United Nations staff on faith, development and partnerships. The Fund regularly convenes consultations between United Nations entities, academia and faith-based organizations on the themes of religion, development and peacebuilding. It also co-sponsored the World Young Women's Christian Association's International Women's Summit, held in July 2011.

46. The Fund developed regional strategies for engaging with faith-based organizations for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, in consultation with national partners, including Governments and civil society.

47. UNFPA Africa supports national authorities in partnering with religious and traditional organizations to launch at the national level the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa, an initiative of the African Union Commission supported by UNFPA to intensify implementation of the Maputo Plan of Action to reduce maternal mortality. Five additional countries (Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Liberia and United Republic of Tanzania) launched the campaign in 2011, bringing the total to 31.

48. At the country level, UNFPA Thailand provided technical assistance to the Asia Muslim Action Network concerning Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), to bridge religious and cultural gaps. Research was conducted in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam, on sociocultural determinants of sexual and reproductive health among migrant women, resulting in recommendations for culturally sensitive policies and services.

49. UNFPA Tajikistan supported the establishment of a religious affairs committee to raise awareness among religious leaders of HIV, reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections and gender issues. UNFPA conducted training courses for religious leaders from all provinces and pioneered a train-the-trainer process linking Islamic precepts with health priorities, a good practice that has been adopted by development counterparts. UNFPA Turkey continued its partnership with different ministries to train religious leaders in ways of dealing with cases involving violence against women. A train-the-trainer course was conducted in May 2010, with the participation of 40 religious leaders; nearly 4,000 religious leaders working in the field were reached. The aim in 2011 is to reach 12,000.

50. During the reporting period, UNFPA Georgia supported youth summer camps aimed at transforming cultural, ethnic and religious diversity into youth assets. Other initiatives included a dialogue with more than 45 different ethnic and religious organizations on the theme of domestic violence, and a humanitarian assistance programme with the Georgian Orthodox Church on the prevention and management of sexual and gender-based violence and on responding to the reproductive health needs of internally displaced persons. UNFPA Georgia also partnered with the Patriarchate of Georgia to provide assistance and family dignity kits to more than 2,000 families, covering 8,000 internally displaced persons.

51. UNFPA Kyrgyzstan conducted training courses to promote sexual and reproductive health, family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention along Islamic lines. After the inter-ethnic conflict that devastated communities in the south of Kyrgyzstan, faith-based organizations were involved in implementing a United Nations flash appeal, bringing communities together and successfully addressing

gender-based violence in conservative contexts, for example, through community-based theatres.

52. UNFPA Latin America and the Caribbean supports programmes with regional faith-based organizations on the prevention of gender based violence, HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, on working against stigma and discrimination and on the promotion of Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals.

53. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNFPA established a national forum of faith-based organizations to partner with UNFPA, a successful partnership model for achieving the reproductive health-related Goals that has been replicated in Colombia and Mexico. Also during the reporting period, UNFPA Guyana engaged diverse faith-based organizations to establish youth-friendly spaces in which to address sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. The success of that initiative led to a request from the Guyana Anglican Diocese for support to be provided to the Anglican National Youth Council and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew in their observation of the International Year of the Family.

54. The partnerships provided a space for dialogue between UNFPA, faith-based organizations and Governments to tackle sensitive issues using a culturally sensitive rights-based approach. UNFPA acknowledges the diversity of faith-inspired organizations and mobilization, promotes multi-faith and intercultural partnerships, advocates engagement with faith-based communities as a means of building coherent partnerships between the United Nations system and civil society on human rights mandates, and recommends that such partnerships be systematically monitored and evaluated along agreed principles and across the United Nations system.

United Nations Children's Fund

55. During the reporting period, UNICEF made significant progress in its work with multireligious structures and religious communities to promote the rights of children. The unique moral authority and extensive networks of religious communities makes them critical partners in UNICEF programmes that target the most disadvantaged children and families. In 2011, UNICEF will publish a guide for working with religious communities aimed at UNICEF staff and other advocates of children's rights, providing concrete strategies for effective engagement and examples relating to key areas of work, such as child protection, education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation and HIV/AIDS.

56. As part of a multi-year partnership to strengthen the capacity of religious communities, particularly interreligious mechanisms, as a means of protecting children affected by conflict, UNICEF and Religions for Peace organized a high-level round-table meeting in New York in November 2010, during which concrete commitments were made to address violence against children. The resulting publication, entitled "From Commitment to Action: What Religious Communities can do to Eliminate Violence against Children", was translated into French, Japanese and Spanish, and distributed to UNICEF country offices, and Religions for Peace affiliates and relevant external partners.

57. In 2010, 19 UNICEF country offices participated in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children initiative, which mobilized religious leaders around a

common agenda for maternal health and child survival, with a focus on exclusive breastfeeding. In Algeria, sermons were given in the country's 15,000 mosques on children's rights and the importance of breastfeeding. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, four of the main religious groups, which have a combined network of nearly 30 million people, led week-long campaigns on the importance of key family health practices, such as breastfeeding and immunization. In Nepal, multireligious coordinated activities, including weekly religious services, focused on maternal and child health. In 2011-2013, the focus of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children initiative will be on eliminating violence against children.

58. UNICEF country programmes continued to work with multireligious structures and religious communities to promote the rights of children. Examples of country office activities included:

(a) In India, more than 400 religious leaders from around the country met near the southern city of Bangalore to address stigma and discrimination linked to HIV and AIDS;

(b) In Angola, the Ministry for Women and Family led an alliance of nine religious organizations to promote 12 key family competencies to keep children alive, healthy and well;

(c) In Nicaragua, an alliance between the Theological and Social Research Centre and the non-governmental organization Acción Medica Cristiana to promote theological-pastoral reflexion on the HIV epidemic succeeded in mobilizing churches on the rights of people living with HIV;

(d) In Kenya, UNICEF, together with the Kenya Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and the Interreligious Council of Kenya, launched an initiative with Christian, Muslim and Hindu religious leaders to promote key high-impact interventions for maternal and child health within their respective religious communities.

Celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week

59. In its resolution 65/5, the General Assembly proclaimed the first week of February every year to be World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs, following an initiative by Jordan. The first celebration of the Week was marked by over 200 events in 40 countries, (see http://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com).

60. The United Nations observed the Week by holding events such as an interfaith breakfast, organized by Department of Public Information with the Committee of Religious Non-governmental Organizations at the United Nations; a special event on the role of faith-based organizations and interfaith initiatives in development, reconciliation and peacebuilding, organized by the Office of the Permanent Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, with the participation of several United Nations entities; and a film screening in partnership with the Alliance of Civilizations.

61. At the launch of the Week, the Secretary-General delivered a message in which he echoed the call by the General Assembly for places of worship to spread the message of harmony, peace and goodwill between religions.

62. In addition, a special event was organized on 16 May 2011 by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations to commemorate the International Day of Vesak, 2,600 years of Buddhism, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/115. An interfaith dialogue on peace, harmony and coexistence was held at United Nations Headquarters, with close to 20 speakers representing various Buddhist organizations from different countries and leaders of other religious traditions.

VI. A rights-based approach to dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions

63. General Assembly resolution 65/138 on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, and earlier resolutions on the same issue, contain specific provisions on human rights and non-discrimination and on a rights-based approach to intercultural and interreligious dialogue. A number of United Nations entities have carried out activities that directly contribute to the implementation of those resolutions.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

64. During the seventeenth session of the Human Rights Council, held from 30 May to 17 June 2011, OHCHR organized a panel discussion on strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs, pursuant to paragraph 9 of Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief". The discussion focused on the effective implementation of measures and practical actions to promote a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels.

65. For 2011, OHCHR has organized four expert workshops, in the various regions of the world, on the issue of freedom of expression and the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred as reflected in articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In doing so, OHCHR aims at conducting a comprehensive assessment of the global state of implementation of the international obligation to prohibit incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, while fully respecting freedom of expression, and to subsequently assist in devising actions at all levels.

66. In October 2011, as part of the International Year for People of African Descent, OHCHR will launch a pilot fellowship programme for people of African descent. The fellowship programme will enable participants to enhance their understanding of the United Nations human rights system and share experiences from different countries and regions.

67. Regarding the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, the High Commissioner submitted an annual report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/16/39) that highlights the efforts being made by

OHCHR and the United Nations human rights machinery to strengthen the implementation of the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

68. In order to advance understanding of the Declaration and encourage protection of the rights of minorities, OHCHR organizes consultations, seminars and workshops that provide an opportunity to examine how minorities can take part in civil and political life while maintaining their cultural and religious identities. Also, OHCHR has launched a series of regional consultations with a view to encouraging the participation of minorities in the administration of justice through law enforcement, in particular policing. Those consultations make it possible for participants to share experiences while focusing on practices that have proved to be successful. The good practices are those that secure the representation and participation of minorities in policing while safeguarding the cultural and religious identity of minorities. The fourth such consultation was held in Bangkok in May 2011.

69. OHCHR cooperated with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to encourage the inclusion of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the organization's negotiations on its text on traditional knowledge, genetic resources and traditional cultural expressions.

70. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 15/7, OHCHR is organizing a panel discussion on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the well-being and identity of indigenous peoples, to be held during the eighteenth session of the Human Rights Council.

United Nations Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

71. In his interim report to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly (A/66/156), the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief focuses on the role of the State in promoting interreligious communication. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that communication and public debate constitute a crucial element for human rights to become a reality. He points to a number of possibilities for States, including by encouraging interreligious communication by publicly expressing their appreciation for well-defined dialogue projects; providing financial subsidies to existing or newly created projects; facilitating dialogue between members of various religious or belief groups in the framework of the State itself; and developing forums for regular encounters of people of different religious or belief affiliations.

72. In 2011, the independent expert in the field of cultural rights submitted a report (A/HRC/17/38) to the Human Rights Council on the right of access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage. The report underlines the need for intercultural dialogue on cultural heritage, for peacebuilding processes to include the repair of cultural heritage with the participation of all concerned and for the promotion of intercultural dialogue regarding cultural heritage. The independent expert noted that dialogue is important when conflicts of interpretation about the meaning and significance of cultural heritage arise. She also noted that the preservation/safeguarding of cultural heritage should aim at ensuring human development, the building of peaceful and democratic societies and the promotion of cultural diversity. In particular, she recommended that States recognize and value the diversity of cultural heritages present in their territories and under their jurisdiction,

and acknowledge, respect and protect the possible diverging interpretations that may arise over cultural heritage.

VII. Outcome of the consultations on the proposal for a decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue

73. In its resolution of 63/22, the General Assembly requested the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to coordinate with UNESCO in facilitating consideration of the possibility of proclaiming a United Nations decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace. Such a decade was originally proposed by interfaith, faith-based and value-based non-governmental organizations that created a coalition in favour of the initiative and held a series of consultations at the United Nations and elsewhere (see www.faithdecadeforpeace.net).

74. In 2009, in order to comply with that mandate, the Secretariat, in coordination with UNESCO, carried out consultations in order to gather views from various relevant actors and better assess the potential added value of such a decade and the difficulties that the process might generate. The outcome of the consultations is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/64/325, paras. 88-104).

75. The consultation process revealed that while several Member States welcomed the initiative as an opportunity to enhance dialogue and understanding among cultures and religions, concerns were expressed as to the content of the initiative, the context and process through which the idea was developed, its effectiveness, and the costs involved. The above-mentioned report concluded that further consultations would be needed before a broad and consensual mobilization on the proposal could be reached at the intergovernmental level. The report also drew the attention of the Assembly to the need to ensure coherence and coordination of the multiplicity of initiatives taken on intercultural, interreligious and intercivilizational matters and to closely liaise with UNESCO.

76. In its resolution 64/81, the Assembly did not take any action on the proposed decade and requested the Secretary-General, in coordination with UNESCO, to further solicit views of Member States on the matter and to reporting to it at its sixty-sixth session, building on the information contained in the reports of the Secretary-General at its sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions and the relevant initiatives taken in the course of 2010. In its resolution 65/138, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-sixth session, building on the information contained in the same reports and the relevant initiatives taken in the course of 2011.

77. A note verbale dated 4 March 2011 and a reminder dated 9 June 2011 were sent to Member States on the matter. At the time of reporting, the Secretariat had received responses, summarized below, from Albania, Chile, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Togo and the European Union.

78. Albania, Chile, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines and Togo expressed support for

proclaiming a United Nations decade for interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation for peace. They considered that such an initiative would make a positive contribution to improving understanding and cooperation between the nations and peoples of diverse cultures. Some States also mentioned the relevance of the initiative with respect to peace and peacebuilding activities that the Organization strives to promote.

79. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia underlined the connection between the proposed decade and activities carried out on the same topic as part of the First and Second World Conferences on Interreligious and Intercivilization Dialogue, organized by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Pakistan was of the view that the decade would strengthen the United Nations in its role to ensure respect for and the promotion of multiculturalism and to protect peace and harmony among different societies and nations.

80. The Philippines stressed that the proclamation of such a decade could be used to highlight in a sustained manner the various interreligious and intercultural dialogue initiatives held at the United Nations, in order to bring existing programmes in that field under one ambit and to draw in more stakeholders, including women, youth and civil society organizations. In that context, it was suggested that UNESCO should play a guiding role by formulating a programme of activities for the decade in consultation with Member States.

81. Togo suggested that the proclamation of the decade should be followed by the adoption of national action plans aimed at strengthening dialogue among religions and cultures. Togo also proposed the proclamation of an international day for intercultural and interfaith dialogue, to ensure a continuing commitment on the issue.

82. The European Union raised a number of concerns about the initiative. It underlined that the United Nations system and Member States could play a facilitating role in the field of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and promote the necessary conditions for that dialogue to take place, but that they should not lead such dialogue given the fact that both interreligious and intrareligious dialogue primarily took place between individuals and religious organizations and leaders. In addition, the European Union stressed that interreligious dialogue was only one of the various dimensions of intercultural dialogue and that the aim of the involvement of the United Nations should be to promote intercultural dialogue as a whole, including its religious dimension. Hence, the European Union did not believe that the proposed decade would contribute significantly to a genuine dialogue.

83. The European Union stated its opposition in principle to new international days, years or decades, given their questionable effectiveness, and stressed that the proposed decade should be carefully assessed against the background of other ongoing initiatives, including the outcome of and lessons learned from the proclamation of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. For those reasons, the European Union concluded that that it currently did not see the added value of proclaiming the decade.

84. The consultations carried out by the Secretariat have led to a limited expression of interest for the proposed decade. Only 10 responses were received, including 1 from a group of countries that raised serious concerns as to the added

value of the initiative. It is therefore unlikely that the General Assembly can take a decision on the proposal in the near future. Instead, and in order to ensure coherence in the work of the United Nations system in this field, the Assembly may wish to consider future possible celebrations in connection with initiatives taken by the governing bodies of UNESCO, including in the follow-up to the International Decade for a Culture and Peace.

VIII. Conclusion

85. The present report testifies to the diversity of activities carried out by many actors in the United Nations system to offer concrete support for dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations and to implement the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in those fields.

86. The increased involvement of Member States in this area of work is also to be noted, as exemplified by the leading role played by several of them in proposing the proclamation of international days or weeks and organizing celebration activities, such as the Global Interfaith Harmony Week. Other far-reaching projects initiated by Member States include the "Foundations of a long-term strategy for global sustainable development based on partnership of civilizations", initiated by the Pitirim Sorokin-Nikolai Kondratieff International Institute and presented to the United Nations by the Permanent Missions of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation to the United Nations.

87. The high number of interconnected dialogue initiatives being carried out raises the issue of the scope of the present report. In that respect, the Assembly may wish to explore possibilities for harmonizing the reporting of all issues that deal with intercultural, interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue as well as a culture of peace, cultural diversity, tolerance, mutual understanding and rapprochement of cultures, so as to strengthen policy coherence. The Assembly may also wish to request that future reports focus on the specific dimensions of such dialogue, with a change in focus every year, and to address the ways such dialogue can contribute to peace, development or human rights.